



# Annual Report



SOVRINTENDENZA  
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI  

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SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

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# Foreword



# 1. The Value of Heritage in Times of Crisis and its Resilience in National Recovery

Malta's cultural and natural heritage are main features of nation-building, self-actualisation and education such that Article 9 of the Constitution of Malta and Article 4 of the Cultural Heritage Act oblige the State and all those present in Malta and Gozo to care for heritage. Cultural heritage is also a major element of attractiveness for tourism, offering bespoke marketing as a destination. The tourism industry is a major contributor in Malta's economy, having a multiplier economic effect in various sectors, including heritage regulation and management. The world-wide pandemic restrictions immediately demonstrated Malta's dependency on tourism as the lack of visitors to museums, accommodation, catering, retail, services, and events meant a sudden decline in revenue, creating problems with staff retention and sustainability. Museum operators had to reinvent accessibility to the museum culture through online virtual services, which however could not address the decrease in revenue needed for maintenance expenses.

The Covid-19 lockdown in summer 2020 also had an impact on the character of streets and open spaces of historic centres devoid of people. One may describe the experience of roaming through Valletta during the lockdown as 'the bizarre beauty of Valletta's empty streets.' Similarly, lockdown impacted the elderly from their usual mingling at village squares. Further pandemic impact on cultural heritage included the suspension of the Maltese traditional parish festa – denying enthusiast from participation in the preparation and the holding of the actual events.

Nonetheless, cultural heritage became more valued in such a time of crises as a prime symbol of the feel-good factor, whereby cultural heritage sites were frequently featured in government bulletins on the state of Covid-19 affairs in Malta and in the President's billboards promoting post-Covid-19 recovery, despite that cultural heritage has no direct connection with health and medical matters.

## 2. Overview of 2020 Performance by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage prevailed over the unexpected Covid-19 pandemic though it had to improvise significantly during 2020. Nonetheless, the Superintendence responded very well during the crises and ensured that all routine services remained effective to acceptable levels of efficiency. This despite the limited budget allocation, part of which had to be used for unavoidable Covid-19 precautions, which delayed or held in abeyance the delivery of certain targets, such as the much-needed recruitment and training.

Almost all the Superintendence employees were provided with teleworking through the use of online services such as e-apps, video meetings, inspections (maintaining safety distance), sterilisation of the offices, temporary closing of offices to the public whilst maintaining a service through online facilities, providing contact tracing register for controlled access, provision of hand sanitisers in reception and in all rooms, installation of screens at reception and between certain workspaces.

For the third year running, the Superintendence continued with the organisational restructuring commenced in April 2018. During 2020, procedural and organisational changes, improvements and new measures were continued. These included the introduction of administrative charges for certain services to recoup expenses.

During 2020 the Superintendence endeavored to increase its commitment in its main areas of responsibilities as set by the Cultural Heritage Act. Routine tasks were kept within expected standards of performance and response time as reported in detail in the respective sections of this report.

### **3. Special Achievements in the Cultural Heritage Sector**

#### **3.1 UNESCO World Heritage List**

In December 2020 UNESCO included the *Ftira Maltija* (Maltese flat bread) in the list of World Intangible Heritage following efforts by the Department of Culture chairing the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee, in which the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage is a member.

#### **3.2 Warrant for Conservators-Restorers**

During 2020 the Board of Warrant for Conservators-Restorers made giant strides and achieved its target to roll out the first warrants on 10 August 2020. The Superintendent of Cultural Heritage is a member of the Board and provided a registrar and meeting facilities which helped to accelerate the process.

#### **3.4 European Standards for Conservation and Restoration**

Malta also made progress in its participation in the European Standards for Conservation and Restoration (CEN Standards) and during 2020 actively participated in several work groups, assessing documents and voting. The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage has a representative on the Malta CEN Committee.

#### **3.5 E-RIHS – Heritage Sciences**

Another achievement was Malta joining E-RIHS formally as a full member through the interest, and active support of Ms Joyce Dimech, Permanent Secretary (MHAL) and that of Hon Dr José Herrera, Minister for National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government (MHAL). Malta is represented by a National Node made up of several entities, including the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. The National Node will also be discussing and drafting a National Research Agenda for Cultural Heritage.

## **4. Continuity and Change**

### **4.1 Financial limitations, problems, and resultant pressure**

The Superintendence's budget requires a revision to meet with modern demands emanating from annual increased workloads and pressure to deliver in less time, as well as for the Superintendence to meet all its statutory functions. The human resources requirement of the Superintendence needs redress as recommend in various management reports throughout the years. As from 2018 the budget allocation started to increase reaching €700,000 for 2019 and again for 2020 and had to be given additional funds to reach the required €1,100,000. This increase was mainly due to the employment of additional officers in addition to the remaining ten officers as at 2018. At present, the Superintendence employs 38 officers only, when the required compliment is estimated to be about 65 officers.

### **4.2 Measures to address statutory Special Powers of the State**

During 2020 the Superintendence analysed its ability to implement its remit as set by the Cultural Heritage Act, especially due to increased cases on infringements and vulnerability of cultural heritage, the protection of immovable and movable cultural heritage on land and underwater. Various procedural, policy and fiscal measures were found required for the Superintendence to implement the responsibilities set for the Superintendence by the law and to meet international obligations. The main findings pointed out for the need to update the legislation and regulations and for adequate funding to support recruitment and training, acquisition of specialised equipment, software, facilities, and expertise, and the shift to provide online services. Additionally, the Superintendence needs to bring itself up to date in measures to recoup expenses, address non-compliance and ensure compensation for impacts on heritage, to have sufficient funding for emergencies, accidental discoveries and projects, as well as participate in international fora and work towards enabling government to ratify certain international instruments.

### **4.3 Change in Superintendent**

In November 2020 the Ministry for National Heritage, the Arts and Local Councils appointed Joseph Magro Conti, the Superintendent at the time, as Technical Consultant Cultural Heritage within the MHAL's Permanent Secretary's Office to work on reforms in the cultural heritage sector. Kurt Farrugia, former Head of Heritage-Planning Consultations Unit at the Superintendence was appointed as the new Superintendent. The two are in liaison on reviews of various procedures in the cultural heritage sector.

## **5. Major Challenges in 2020 and the Way Forward for 2021**

5.1 Despite that the Superintendence dealt with the emergence of Covid-19 quite adequately, the pandemic's persistence in 2021 may induce difficulties in recruitment, hands-on training and in implementing projects.

5.2 Insufficient funding once again weighed down the Superintendence as it was not possible to recruit and provide training, exasperated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the past two years' improvements the Superintendence is still catching up with years of backlog of inadequate funding and capacity building.

5.3 A constant major challenge still remains how to address the negative attitude towards heritage from certain sectors owing to passiveness and lack of appreciation of heritage, coupled with the cumulative interest in expanding profits through building development and speculation at the cost of cultural heritage, the natural environment, health, safety and wellbeing, the quality of place and life and negative impacts on other economic sectors namely tourism, and in keeping international obligations related to the care of cultural heritage at acceptable standards.

5.4 Through the Superintendence's restructuring, it has become more apparent that there is need to align legislation, policy, standards, procedures, service provision, capacity building, training and enforcement with the actual situation on the ground and with technological advancements happening world-wide. In this regard, the challenges vary from recouping of expenses for services by the Superintendence and for government to continue to invest in the Superintendence



**Joseph Magro Conti**  
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(former-November 2020)



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Director Support Services



**Kurt Farrugia**  
Superintendent of Cultural Heritage  
(in office)

**March 2021**





# Cultural Heritage Data Management



## The National Protective Inventory: Immovable Heritage

Throughout 2020 the Superintendence consolidated its resources on converting its archaeology site data to spatial data, a key project which was initiated in 2019. The process consists in georeferencing the locations of known cultural heritage sites that were discovered since the setting up of the Superintendence (in 2002) as well as during the duration of its precursor – the Museum's Department (1903 – 2002).

By the end of 2020, **2,292** locations with varying levels of cultural heritage significance were georeferenced along with **965** sites that are deemed as 'non-discovery sites'. Non-discovery sites are sites where some archaeological surveillance was carried out by the Superintendence but in which no archaeological discoveries were made. These non-discovery sites are equally important to the Superintendence's regulatory role.

The geo-referenced information is uploaded through a GIS platform onto a map of the Maltese Islands, to provide a visual representation of the location and distribution of sites of cultural significance. Consequently, sites which do not show evidence of any discoveries provide information on distribution patterns when combined with discovery sites. By applying geoprocessing tools better prediction models can be formulated when combined both datasets.

The Superintendence is also in the process of plotting underwater sites falling within the contiguous zone as well as land-based coastal sites of cultural importance, particularly those which may be impacted by climate change and coastal erosion.

The georeferenced data which will continue to be updated will greatly assist the Superintendence in the fulfilment of its regulatory function, particularly within the Heritage Planning Consultation Unit, where assessments of culturally and archaeologically sensitive areas which may be impacted by development are made. Immediate visual spatial representations with relevant data can be accessed efficiently using filters providing a wealth of information to expedite the decision-making process.

### Special Finds

As part of its review of established processes and procedures, throughout 2020 the Superintendence continued the process started last year to create a better cataloguing system of its Special Finds Collection with the final aim of having a more accountable and accessible collection. The inventory system will permit a more efficient retrieval of these objects through various search modes including by type of material, object name, site etc.

In the coming months, this inventory will be expanded further to include special finds currently in the Superintendence's collection, as well as those items constantly being unearthed in ongoing and future excavations. In 2020 works focused on developing an inventory system for these 'special finds', and to date 349 objects have been given a unique code and listed in the Special Finds Inventory System. This collection consists of cultural heritage items which are considered as 'special finds' in that they may be rare, exceptionally important or because they do not form part of the main categories such as pottery sherds or bones. These finds were discovered during excavations led by the Superintendence, or by freelance archaeologists working under its supervision. In addition, these 'special finds' often require some extra care for their conservation and storage due to their fragility and/or small size.



*Items such as those shown above are considered as special finds and are registered in the Special Finds Inventory System. The above image shows four glass perfume bottles discovered at Triq Kola Xara, Rabat, Malta in 2020.*

## Registry

In 2020 the Superintendence embarked on a monumental task aimed at taking stock of the large quantity of administrative files and cases related to cultural heritage aspects ranging in date from 1934 to 2020, which are currently located in the registry of the Superintendence. File redundancies were determined to free up physical space for future expansion of this crucial registry as well as improving the accessibility to the data they contain. Duplication of material related to the consultations stage on development applications filed, which could be accessed digitally or in physical format from the Planning Authority were prepared for shredding. In line with the National Archives Act, any information deemed pertinent from redundant files was logged and scanned, making the material accessible in digital format for future users. Until all physical files are made digitally accessible, they will be stored in line with the recommendations from the National Archives of Malta. To this effect all open-ended metal containers were replaced with closed containers to safeguard the physical files from dust and humidity.

The entire project will ensure all files required for administrative and research purposes located at the Superintendence are securely held in one area of the building and can be easily tracked accordingly. In addition, reorganising and reassessing information held within the registry will contribute to the ongoing development of the National Protective Inventory. To date **5,000 files (1,200 kg)** have been deemed to be redundant, duplicate or requiring condensing. These made up **25%** of the total existing physical registry. The Superintendence aims to conclude the first stage of this process in 2021.

## Archaeological Finds Depository management and upkeep

In 2020, the Superintendence proceeded with the re-organisation of its depository (where archaeological finds are held in storage for safekeeping, preservation and study) – a process which was initiated in 2019. All the finds up till the present have been grouped by year. The next stage in the process will be to sub-group these finds by site code and give a unique shelf-mark for each site code which will enable full traceability of all materials as well as link the depository with the National Inventory. The process will also link to the Special Finds Register as discussed in an earlier section of this report, where all special finds at the repository will be catalogued and assessed to determine any cleaning, consolidation or restoration requirements.





## 2. Heritage Advice on Building Development



## Development Consultations: Land-use and development applications

During 2020, the Superintendence continued fulfilling its role as a designated statutory external consultee to the Planning Authority on land use and development planning applications. The Superintendence is consulted on all full development planning applications received by the Planning Authority, as well as on minor amendment applications, summary planning applications, development notification orders, dangerous structures, regularisation applications and planning control applications which may have an impact on cultural heritage.

The Superintendence is also consulted on roadworks permit applications by Transport Malta and by the Environment and Resources Authority on reports of cultural heritage surveys as part of the Environment Impact Assessments. A classification by type and quantities of development applications is found in Figure 2.

### Administrative changes

Two new personnel recruited in January 2020 joined the Heritage Planning Consultation Unit, as replacements of two members of staff. The overall staff complement within the unit was therefore retained, consisting of 1 unit head, 1 senior cultural heritage executive, 8 executive officers and 1 administrative assistant. The new recruits underwent induction training which included lectures, workshops and job-shadowing.

Very little changes were carried out to the operations of the unit. The filtering system which was started in 2018 and further enhanced in 2019, proved a success at weeding out cases which had no cultural heritage concern. This system was retained during 2020 with little changes to its operation. To ensure its efficiency, instead of one officer carrying the filtering of cases daily, the task was shared between two officers, to allow further discussion and improved assessment.

### Overview of development application trends

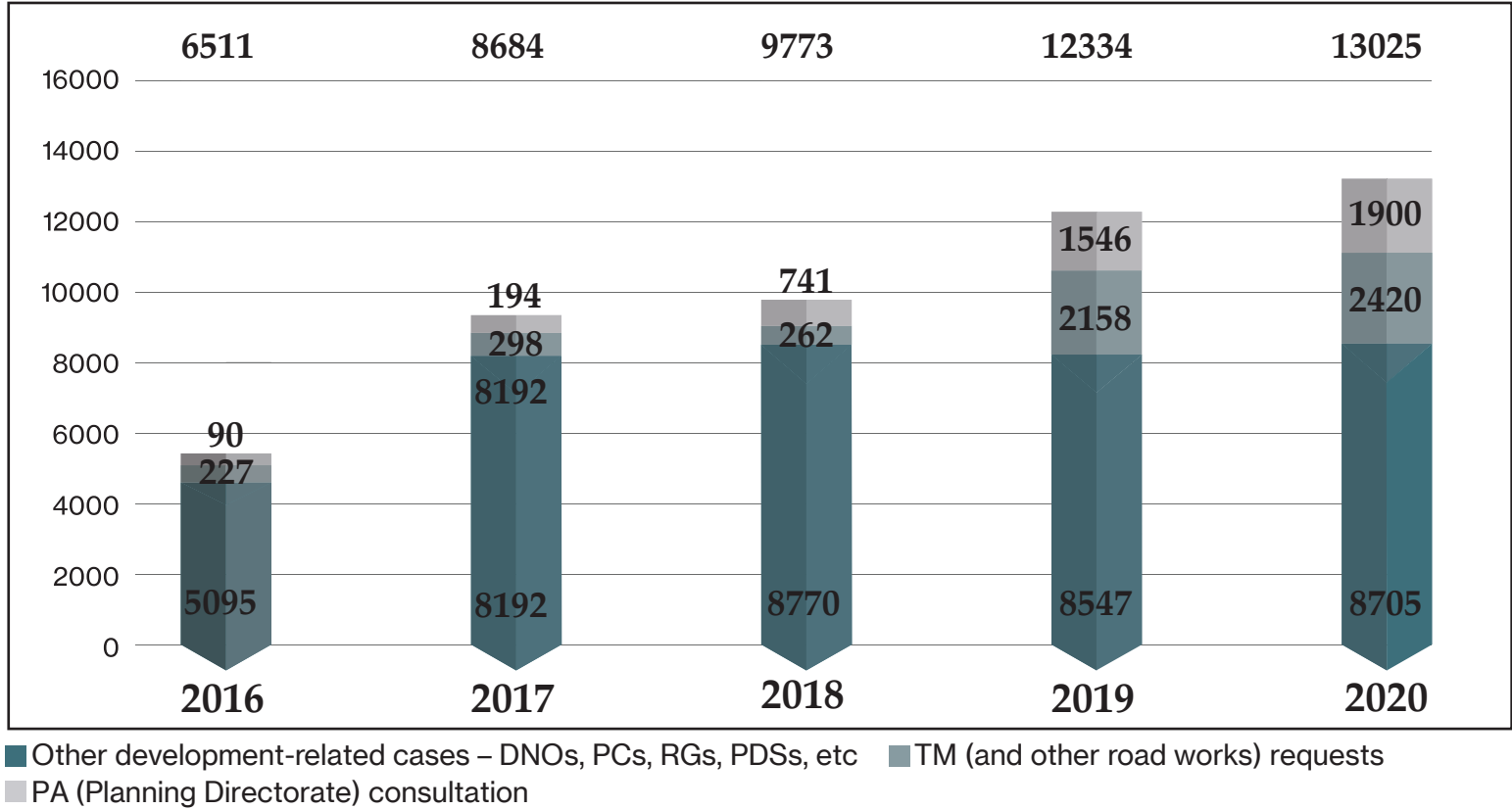
In 2020, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage received a total of **10,516** consultation requests from the Planning Authority on development planning applications (PA applications), of which the most significant included **6,393** first consultations, **2,312** re-consultations, **562** minor amendment consultations as well as **550** summary applications (see Figure 2). This amount excludes other types of development applications, such as Development Notification Orders, Planning Control Applications, Dangerous Structures, Regularisations and others. This marks an increase on the previous year when **9,967** development planning applications were received.

Of the total of **6,393** first consultations (a slight decrease from the 6,761 received in 2019), around **2,500** applications were responded to at filtering stage, which amounts to c. **39%** of the total new consultations received. Whilst this marks a decrease in the number of applications filtered (44% during 2019), the increase in the number of re-consultations carried out by the Planning Authority (from 1,786 in 2019 up to **2,312** in 2020 - excluding e-mail communications) indicates an increased engagement in the assessment of cases which impact on cultural heritage.

The road works permit applications received in 2020 increased slightly from 2,241 in 2019 to **2,420** in 2020. Other applications, such as Development Notification Orders, Planning Control applications, Regularisation applications, and Dangerous Structures have retained a relatively constant number.

2020 however, saw a drastic reduction in consultations regarding Environment Impact Assessments received from the Environment and Resources Authority – from 45 in 2019 down to 7 in 2020.

Consultation Requests in Numbers



**Figure 1:** Chart showing the number of consultations related to development planning received over the past 5 years

Type of consultation received	Amount
<b>Consultation by e-Apps (Planning Authority online system)</b>	
Planning Directorate Consultation	6,393
Planning Directorate Re-Consultation	2,312
Planning Directorate Consultation Following Material Change	423
Consultation Following Republishing	7
Consultation Following Deferral to Consultees	116
Minor Amendment Consultation	562
Consultation (External/pre 2016 cases)	13
Screening Consultation (Major Projects)	75
Summary – Post recommendation request	58
Summary	550
<i>*Consultation by e-mail (difficult to keep track of quantities, as e-mails are sent to multiple officers and generic e-mails, often in copy of each other)</i>	
Post Decision Consultation	7
DNO - Development Notification Order	40
DS - Dangerous Structures	19
PC - Planning Control	17
RG - Regularisation	1
RFC - Request for SCH Clearance (FDA post 2nd consultation)	Data not collected
Appeals Consultation	3
EIA - Environment Impact Assessment	7
PDS - Project Description Statement	
SEA - Strategic Environment Assessment	
Heritage Impact Assessments (UNESCO World Heritage Sites)	-
TP – Tree Permitting	-
Development Briefs	1
Other - Generic Requests	1
<b>Consultation through Transport Malta electronic online system and through e-mail</b>	
RWP - Road Work Permit	2420

**Figure 2:** Number of the different types of development-related consultation requests received in 2020



## Major Projects (Planning Consultations)

Major Projects development applications are a critical part of the consultations that the Planning Authority refer to the Superintendence. Such projects usually involve a much heavier interaction in terms of time, thought and resources, and include site inspections, research, assessments, and various meetings with stakeholders and the architect/applicant. Below is a list of the main major projects the Superintendence engaged with during the past year (see **Figure 3** below).

PA number	Site	Comments
P/08732/18	Hotel on former Tattingers site	The Superintendence continued engaging with the proposed hotel replacing the former Tattingers nightclub and a number of adjacent buildings. The Superintendence is still in discussions on the case.
PA/00990/20	Former Times buildings, Valletta	The proposal to demolish the existing buildings and construct a block of 35 apartments, overlying penthouse level and underlying basement garages saw heavy involvement by the Superintendence in view of the impact the project may have on the Valletta World Heritage Site, and views towards the area.

PA/09786/19	Construction of the Embassy for the People's Republic of China, Pembroke	The construction of an embassy including all the related ancillary facilities required several interventions by the Superintendence to assess the impact of the project in relation to the nearby scheduled buildings pertaining to the military town of Pembroke.
PA/02906/16	Retention of the existing facades of Fort Cambridge Barracks and construction of a multistorey tower hotel, Tigne.	The proposal to restore parts of the last remaining barrack block in Tigne, formerly the Holiday Inn hotel, and to construct a high-rise tower block is still being assessed by the Superintendence.
PA/03693/20	Restoration and upgrading of Senglea entrance	A project mainly involving extensive restoration works to the entrance into the fortified city as well as providing new access to the bastions and the upgrading of the bocçi pitch was favourably considered by the Superintendence, subject to monitoring conditions.
PA/08809/19	Upgrading of Marsa Racecourse to an international standard racecourse	A huge renovation project to the existing racecourse for its upgrading to international standards, involving the construction of a grandstand and a commercial development, also entailed the restoration of the remaining historic structures. The Superintendence imposed a number of conditions to this development proposal.
PA/01522/20	Upgrading of Marsa Racecourse to an international standard racecourse	A project which is still at screening stage has already seen considerable engagement by the Superintendence in view of the sensitivity of the site (existing building is scheduled at Grade 2 and located within an archaeologically sensitive area).

PA/04777/20	Comino hotel and bungalows	Another project which is still at screening stage entailing the redevelopment of the hotel and bungalows at Comino, including the construction of a new hotel and berthing facilities, to which the Superintendence has already made a number of recommendations and requested the submission of further documentation.
PA/03144/19 PA/03012/20 PA/04964/20	Magħtab Landfill	A number of projects involving the regeneration of the landfill at Magħtab, including the construction of new plant areas has seen heavy interaction by the Superintendence, including the carrying out of surveys due to the rich archaeological landscape of Magħtab.
PA/09876/19 PA/01948/20	Mellieha Bay Hotel	A project involving the demolition of the existing hotel and the construction of a new and larger hotel. The Superintendence engaged with this application in view of the historic and archaeological features located within the hotel grounds, as well as due to the architectural merits of the existing hotel.
PA/01635/20	St Luke's Hospital	A major project involving the upgrading of St Luke's Hospital, including demolition of parts of the existing complex to construct new facilities. The Superintendence is one of the main stakeholders in this project in view that the original parts of the hospital are scheduled at Grade 1. The Superintendence made their recommendations on this screening application.

**Figure 3:** A few of the major projects the Superintendence engaged with in 2020

## Planning Tribunal (Appeals)

As a statutory consultee in the planning process the Superintendence receives notification that an appeal has been lodged to the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal. The Tribunal also requested the Superintendent's attendance at a sitting as witness in the proceedings.

## Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (CHAC)

The Superintendence refers for discussion complex development-related cases to the CHAC. The CHAC is an internal committee within the Superintendence and makes recommendations to the Superintendence on development-related issues and scheduling/de-scheduling requests.

During 2020, the CHAC held **47** meetings, made **232** recommendations on development applications and de/scheduling request proposals. The planning applications referred to the CHAC by the Superintendence were mainly projects having a major impact on cultural heritage: major projects, impact on scheduled buildings, demolition, extensive alterations and additions, adverse visual impact, and development applications impacting on World Heritage Sites.





### 3. Archaeological and Restoration Monitoring

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage has the responsibility of monitoring development and construction works in cultural heritage sensitive areas. This role is carried out by the Heritage Monitoring Unit within the Superintendence. This unit is made up of two teams: the Archaeology Monitoring Inspectorate (AMI) and the Building Restoration Inspectorate (BRI) under the supervision of a Head of Unit to streamline and improve surveillance operations.

## Archaeology monitoring

The Archaeology Monitoring Team currently consists of four archaeologists and an office administrator. This marks a reduction in the team's original compliment by one archaeologist who has moved on to another state cultural heritage entity during 2020. Recruitment efforts are underway to bring the team back to its original strength.

As part of its surveillance responsibilities the Superintendence regulates archaeological monitoring of ongoing development works. The objective of archaeological monitoring surveillance is to ensure that construction of works do not, either wilfully or by accident, result in the damaging of historic structures or of archaeological remains.

		2018	2019	2020
1	Cases brought forward from previous year	310	589	684
2	New archaeology monitoring cases	415	380	253
3	<b>Archaeology monitoring cases active during the year</b> (total of headline no.1 and no. 2)	<b>725</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>937</b>
4	Cases closed	136	285	328
5	<b>Ongoing cases as at end of year</b> (subtracting headline no. 4 from no. 3)	<b>589</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>609</b>

**Figure 4:** Statistics for 2018, 2019, 2020 for archaeological heritage



The Superintendence continued with maintaining a high on-site presence to offer more timely advice and guidance to the cultural heritage service providers, architects as well as other technical persons. The Superintendence carried out **304** site inspections related to archaeological monitoring during 2020, apart from numerous meetings with architects and clients to discuss way forward where archaeological features were discovered during the development works. This amount of site inspections compares well with the **326** inspections carried out during 2019.

The Archaeology Monitoring Team continued with its hard work to build up a healthy rapport with the major infrastructural providers including but not exclusively, Infrastructure Malta, Water Services Corporation and the Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation. This has led to further improvement in the carrying out of major infrastructures in terms of cultural heritage conservation. Some of the major archaeological interventions and discoveries in 2020 are shown below as well as in Section 6.

## Overview and main challenges/achievements

The Superintendence registered a heavy decrease (from 380 in 2019 to **253** in 2020 – a decrease of **33.4%**) in the number of new requests to carry out archaeological monitoring work on sites covered by development permission during 2020. This decline probably reflects the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on this sector as well as the Superintendence's increased ability to request archaeological monitoring based on improved site prediction analysis in consultations triggered by the Planning Authority during the processing of development applications.

Archaeology was recorded in **162** sites during archaeological monitoring in 2020; effectively every two out of three sites that were investigated yielded archaeological evidence. This is a very positive and exciting outcome considering that 108 discoveries were reported in 2019 from a significantly longer list of monitoring cases. This increase is partly coincidental in that the presence of archaeology can never be known for sure until a site is actually excavated, but it can also be partially attributed to improved site prediction by the Superintendence at development consultation stage as explained above.

The Archaeology Monitoring Team succeeded in closing **328** cases during 2020 in contrast to the 285 cases closed during 2019 – an efficiency improvement of **15%**. This improvement is mainly attributed to the Superintendence managing to reduce the pressure on the pool of field archaeologists to conduct archaeological work and thus enables them to focus more on closing cases. This decrease in the pressure is the result of:

## **This decrease in the pressure is the result of:**

- i. A further slight increase in the number of archaeology monitors available for work during 2020;
- ii. The Superintendence officers directly carrying out a number of archaeological monitoring and excavation tasks in specific projects, mostly related to emergency infrastructural projects where burials with the presence of bones have been found; and
- iii. A decrease in the number of new requests to carry out archaeological monitoring work during last year.

In addition, the total amount of active cases for 2020 (**609**) is lower to that registered at end of 2019 (684). This is a considerable achievement in view of the:

- i. Need to adjust to the new realities and limitations posed by the Covid-19 pandemic;
- ii. Reduction in the staff compliment during 2020;
- iii. The higher-than-usual number of archaeological discoveries during 2020 which require more time and resources to report, record, assess and provide way forward for their preservation whilst permitting the approved developments.

## **Road Works Permits (RWPs)**

In addition to the above, the Superintendence processed **2420** applications for road works of which **750** were considered to require archaeological surveillance. Such roadworks include resurfacing, re-laying of services and repairs of services by Transport Malta, Infrastructure Malta and Water Services Corporation. Major road projects are subject to a Full Development Application and subject to different monitoring regimes. In total, TORs for archaeological monitoring were issued for **93** cases.

There is a noteworthy discrepancy between the total amount of cases that were processed as requiring archaeological surveillance (**750**) and the total amount of cases where actual surveillance took place (**93**). This discrepancy is mostly the result of applicants submitting project details or revised drawings (post-permit) that eliminate the need for archaeological monitoring. In some cases, projected road and infrastructural works do not take place notwithstanding that a road works permit has been issued. Nevertheless, it cannot be excluded that in some cases road and infrastructural works that require archaeological monitoring are carried out without this monitoring taking place. Discussions were initiated with Transport Malta on the matter to implement new strategies that encourage operators to be compliant with cultural heritage matters.



## Cultural Heritage Service Providers

The improvement in the quality of monitoring work by permitted archaeologists registered in 2019 was maintained in 2020 notwithstanding the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on this sector.

**Twenty-five** archaeologists were registered with the Superintendence at the end of 2020; an increase of two archaeologists. Another archaeologist is on probation as at end of 2020. Probationary periods were introduced by the Superintendence in 2018 to step up and improve the profession of the archaeologist. Unfortunately, one service provider resigned the brief during 2020. The Register of permitted archaeologists is accessible on the website of the Superintendence, together with guidance documents defining the Operating Procedures and Standards to be followed in archaeological monitoring cases.

**Four** technical archaeologists were approved during 2020. Another is on probation as at end of year under review. Technical archaeologists are persons formally qualified in archaeology but who do not possess the necessary experience or formal qualification in development-led archaeology. These persons are being registered with the Superintendence as Technical Archaeologists since 2019. Technical archaeologists cannot assume archaeological briefs in their name but must work under the supervision of one of the publicly registered archaeologists until they obtain the necessary experience and formal recognition.

## Major Archaeological Interventions and Discoveries in 2020

The Superintendence's Archaeological Monitoring Team continuously engaged with development-led archaeological investigations. Several discoveries having varying degrees of cultural heritage value were uncovered during monitored works. Below are eighteen major discoveries from 2020. The professional service provided by the archaeological monitors registered with the Superintendence is highly commended and augers well for future professional improvement of the service. At the moment of archaeological discoveries, the project proponents raise concerns and are often not willing to preserve the archaeological features and redesign parts of the project. Ultimately, after persuasive negotiations by the Superintendence, most clients accommodate the preservation of archaeological remains, obviously at extra costs to the project. However, the preservation of cultural patrimony is the obligation of all Maltese citizens as upheld by Article 9 of the Constitution of Malta and by local legislation, apart from basic ethics, typical of an emancipated State. In such situations, notwithstanding the shortage of resources, the Superintendence is making extra effort to expedite direction and decisions as time costs money for all.

## **Punic-Roman structural remains and deposits at *Triq Gheriexem*, Rabat**

Substantial ancient structural remains have been uncovered during the road engineering works at Triq Gheriexem in Rabat. These works proved to be a challenging endeavour to win engineering requirements with the preservation of the emerging cultural heritage features. The existing road which is built on an extensive clay slope was slowly collapsing onto the Fiddien valley jeopardising not only road safety but was causing structural damage to the houses at the back of the road. The road collapse is the result of movement in the clay slope which is subject to constant wet and dry cycles.

The archaeological potential of the site, located at the edge of Roman Melite, was known from the outset. A ground penetrating radar exercise was conducted along the road. The results indicated the presence of potential archaeological features underneath the road and thus a decision was taken together with the architects and engineers at Infrastructure Malta not to proceed with piling works within the road itself but to shift the two rows of piles a few meters away from the ridge. The inner row of piles is required to buttress and consolidate the road, whilst the outer pile is to sustain a pedestrian walkway facing Mtarfa.

The archaeological investigation proceeded with excavating a series of trial pits all along the extent of works. These pits had to be excavated, investigated, documented and reburied soon after since the exposure of the clay bed in these pits was noticed to exacerbate movement of the road. The pits indicated that most archaeological deposits are concentrated under the rock escarpment along the stretch fronting the Gheriexem Fountain towards the Roman Domus. The underlying fields and the stretch towards Nigret and Ghajn Qajjet were found to be devoid of any meaningful archaeology.

Excavation of the rock escarpment uncovered a considerable extent of large-scale rock-cutting and stepped foundations tentatively interpreted as remains of defensive works. Some rock-cutting and structural remains at the very bottom of these features are possibly the formation of a talus - a small built slope or cut into bedrock at the foot of a defensive wall. However, it is significant that no traces of a vallum (ditch) were traced. Pottery from foundation fills indicate that part of these structures date to the Late Punic period (4th / 3rd century BC). Other extents yielded pottery dated to the 1st / 2nd century AD, whilst a short extent of a wall inbuilt within the escarpment may be a late antique / early medieval repair. Roman ceramic tiles were also recovered from the foundation fills. A relatively wide rock cut trench was uncovered at the upper part of the road which may be the remains of a road. However, there is not enough evidence to determine whether this was outside or inside the ancient city. Ancient masonry was found scattered across the site suggesting spoliation, re-use and collapse down the valley.

A relatively modern water reservoir that is fed directly from Gheriexem Fountain across the road was found to be built on top of a probably early-modern water gallery partially built from reused ancient masonry. Planned roadworks in this part were changed to exclude completely this part from any works in order not to jeopardise in any way the water course and the physical integrity of this structure. All discovered archaeological features were documented, surveyed and covered with protective sheeting and sacrificial fill layers before being covered by the new road works. A significant number of the piles were relocated to make sure that they do not impact directly on any cultural heritage feature. The design of the panoramic route was changed to integrate two of the most archaeologically interesting stretches of the escarpment by bridging over them and allow controlled access from the valley side.

### **Catacomb and other burials in *Triq id-Difiza Ċivili*, Mosta**

The site is located within the area of significant archaeological interest at *Tal-Qares* in Mosta. This area forms part of an extensive ancient cultural landscape stretching all the way from *Bużbeżija* l/o Mosta to *Tal-Wej* in Naxxar and include within it the archaeological sites at Ta' Bistra, Tal-Qares and Misraħ Ġhonoq. Other archaeological features were discovered within the immediate surrounding grounds in the last few years.

The site, which formed part of an industrial complex, was archaeologically investigated before the start of new development in line with permit conditions. Various archaeological features including a double-chambered catacomb, shaft and chamber tombs, a pair of cart ruts, traces of quarrying and some agricultural trenches were discovered upon removal of the concrete and asphalted surfaces under archaeological monitoring. Most of the tombs and part of the catacomb were discovered already having been truncated in the past as was evident from the traces of old quarrying and agricultural activity. The development was redesigned to permit the preservation of the discovered cultural heritage features and will permit limited access to the catacombs.





Entrance to one of the chambers in Triq id-Difża Civili Mosta (Photo Source: Tamsin Marie Kingswell - QPML)



Catacomb discovered during works in Triq id-Difża Civili Mosta (Photo Source: Tamsin Marie Kingswell - QPML)





*Catacomb discovered during works in Triq id-Difża Civili Mosta (Photo Source: Tamsin Marie King-swell - QPML)*



## **Silo pits, cart-ruts, ancient quarrying and agricultural trenches at a site in *Triq tax-Xemx u l-Qamar, Triq il-Karmnu*, side road to, *Triq id-Dejma, Fgura***

The site proposed for development falls within an Archaeologically Sensitive Area as designated by the Planning Authority in the South Malta Local Plan (Map FG 3). Throughout the past two decades development-driven projects have yielded archaeological sites in the vicinity of the proposed development. The sensitivity of the area has been known since the 1930s, when Sir Temi Zammit documented the discovery of five Punic-Roman tombs in an area very close to the site proposed for development. These may have actually been silo pits given their description in the 1931/1932 Museum Annual Report and bear a striking resemblance to the silo pits discovered in the site in question.

The site started being investigated as part of an archaeological evaluation due to the proposed development. The process commenced with trial trenches to understand the stratigraphy and to detect the presence of archaeological features. The trial trenches yielded a cluster of silos together with agricultural trenches. Having established the archaeological potential of the site, the investigation of the site proceeded with an open excavation of the entire site to uncover any remaining features and formulate a way forward for the development of the site.

Further archaeological features were discovered with the open excavation of the site. A complex of about fifteen silos, clusters of agricultural trenches, post-holes, and a pair of cart ruts are amongst the features which have been discovered on site. The archaeological excavation of these features is still ongoing and is planned to be completed in 2021.



*Commencement of investigation - trial trenches at Triq tax-Xemx u l-Qamar, Triq il-Karmnu, side road to, Triq id-Dejma, Fgura (Photo Source: Jeremy Besancon – JB Arch Team)*





*Cluster of silos, agricultural trenches, postholes, and traces of cart ruts at Triq tax-Xemx u l-Qamar, Triq il-Karmnu, side road to, Triq id-Dejma, Fgura (Photo Source: Jeremy Besancon- JB Arch Team)*

## **Ancient tomb in a rural road off *Triq il-Garnaw*, *Ta' Lampat*, Santa Luċija/Gudja**

Infrastructure Malta reported the discovery of a tomb during road works. The Superintendence inspected the site and found that an ancient tomb was partially truncated by the ongoing works. The Superintendence secured the site and started its archaeological investigation. A further double chambered tomb was discovered during the archaeological excavation. Further information on this discovery is also included in Section 6.



*Accidental Discovery of Tombs during road works in a rural road off Triq il-Garnaw, Ta' Lampat, Santa Luċija/Gudja (Photo Source: Tamsin Cauchi - QPML)*



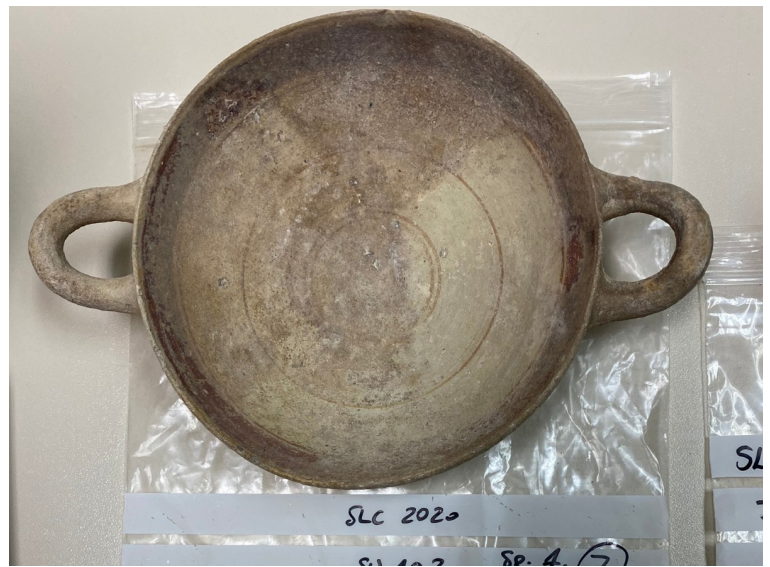


*Archaeological Excavation by the Superintendence in a rural road off Triq il-Garnaw, Ta' Lampat, Santa Luċija/Gudja*





*Tomb 1 after the excavation in a rural road off Triq il-Garnaw, Ta' Lampat, Santa Luċija/Gudja*



Artefacts recovered from the Tomb in a rural road off Triq il-Garnaw, Ta' Lampat, Santa Lucija/Gudja

## Ancient Tombs at Triq Tal-Barrani, Ghaxaq

Two ancient tombs, one much better preserved than the other, were discovered during archaeological monitoring of site preparation works for an approved development at *Triq Tal-Barrani* in Ghaxaq. The area is already known to have formed part of a significant ancient funerary landscape following the discovery of an important cluster of ancient tombs in *Triq il-Barrani* in the early nineties.

Further to the above, over one hundred and fifty vine trenches and numerous postholes were discovered strongly indicating an ancient agricultural setting. The majority of these trenches are aligned in a NW-SE orientation with heavy concentrations of postholes in the NW and NE extremities of the site. It is evident that some agricultural trenches were also subject to additional rock-cutting to widen and deepen them.

The better-preserved tomb consists of a squarish shaft and chamber tomb towards the east of the site. Further studies of the human remains and assemblage are currently being carried out by the Superintendence's Heritage Data Management and Research Unit who excavated the tomb. Further information on this discovery is also included in Section 6.

A heavily truncated tomb is located directly adjacent to the sealed burial. This tomb was truncated by the excavation of the vine trenches indicating that the tombs are older than the trenches. No artefacts or human remains were found in the truncated tomb.





*Tomb shaft at Triq tal-Barrani, Għaxaq*



*Human remains in the tomb chamber at Triq tal-Barrani, Għaxaq*



## Roman remains at *Sqaq Nru 1* in *Triq San Martin*, Rabat, Malta

Roman structural remains and deposits were discovered during archaeological monitoring of foundation trenches carried out to permit an approved development. The site is located within the scheduled Area of Archaeological Importance of Rabat and Mdina and adjacent to another scheduled Grade B property. A cylindrical well hewn in rock with an extensive well neck and head (**horża**) in random rubble technology was initially discovered during the preliminary inspection.

In view of the sensitivity of the possible remains to be uncovered, a number of test pits were excavated. These resulted in an extensive stratigraphy, Roman *torba* flooring and aligned ashlar blocks. A considerable amount of large diagnostic pottery sherds including cooking ware and amphorae were unearthed during these works. Archaeological deposits are located about 15cm below the foundations of a relatively recent house. The main stratigraphy is composed of a reddish soil layer overlying a dark brown deposit with a high frequency of small pottery fragments above a *torba* flooring and ashlars. The *torba* flooring is built above a well-constructed bedding layer on bedrock. A charcoal layer with a significant amount of pottery shards, bones and molluscs was identified in some pits just above the *torba* flooring. The archaeological remains indicate the remains of a domestic building.

The discovery of these remains led to a complete redesign of the approved development's foundations not to impact any further on the archaeological remains. Any further foundation trenches will continue to be archaeologically monitored although these are planned to take place within modern deposits, above a blinding layer overlying the archaeological layers.



Roman masonry (left), ancient aquifer well at *Sqaq Nru 1* in *Triq San Martin*, Rabat, Malta (Photo Source: Ivana Jerkin Erak)

## Punic tombs at *Triq Guzeppi Montebello, Tarxien*

A cluster of Punic tombs were discovered during archaeological monitoring for site preparation works for an approved development in Tarxien between 2018 and 2019. The Superintendence excavated one of these tombs in 2019 and continued with the excavation of a further four burials in 2020. The Superintendence was assisted also by the private archaeologists who have led the archaeological monitored and made the initial discoveries. Further information on this discovery is also included in Section 6.

## Catacomb at *Sqaq Nru. 2 in Triq Bir ir-Riebu, Rabat, Malta*

The Superintendence discovered a catacomb during an inspection following a report that a Second World War air raid shelter was found during alteration works. The catacomb is extensive with a number of *ambulacra* (corridors) blocked off presumably because they pass under third party properties. The catacomb is typically characterised by different types of tombs including *arcosolia*, canopy tombs and loculi. A possible sealing slab was amongst the items found scattered in the catacomb. Large rectangular cuts, still unexcavated were also identified at the entrance to the catacomb. The ground was characterised by pottery scatters and some small bone fragments, but no distinguishable human remains or whole artefacts were noted. The catacomb was used as an air raid shelter during World War II as indicated by some of the wartime period items scattered in the corridors. After the war, the catacomb was apparently used for storage. The catacomb is satisfactorily preserved, and the ongoing works will secure its integration within the rest of the building.



General views of the catacomb showing *arcosolia*, shelf tombs and possibly a *triclinium* at *Sqaq Nru. 2* in *Triq Bir ir-Riebu, Rabat*





*Possibly a tomb sealing slab at Sqaq Nru. 2 in Triq Bir ir-Riebu, Rabat*



## Human remains at *Peacock Gardens*, Marsamxett, Valletta

Human bones and faunal remains were discovered by archaeologists monitoring the excavation of two test pits for a feasibility study of a lift connecting the ferries at Marsamxett and Marsamxett Road. Archaeological and historical remains were already documented in these gardens in previous rehabilitation works. The human remains were found in a context apparently related to the bastion casemates' foundations. Further assessment is required in this regard which together with the scientific study of the remains are planned to take place in 2021. The excavation works are projected to continue this year depending on the outcome of the preliminary results of the feasibility study.



*A human radius discovered at Peacock Gardens, Marsamxett, Valletta (Photo Source: Tamsin Cauchi, QPML)*





*Human rib and fragmented bones discovered at Peacock Gardens, Marsamxett, Valletta (Photo Source: Tamsin Cauchi, QPML)*



## Ancient quarrying in *Triq il-Bistra*, Mosta

Ancient quarrying was discovered during an archaeological evaluation for a proposed development located within the buffer of the scheduled site of *Ta' Bistra* catacombs in Mosta. A series of agricultural trenches and quarry pits were uncovered during the archaeological excavation of the site. Initial interpretation of the site suggests that the quarrying forms part of the wider extensive quarry that cut into the catacombs at *Ta' Bistra* possibly in late antiquity.



Ancient quarry face in *Triq il-Bistra*, Mosta (Photo Source: Jeremy Besancon, JB ARCH)





*Aerial photo showing the ancient quarry remains in Triq il-Bistra, Mosta (Photo Source: Jeremy Besancon, JB ARCH)*

### **Late Punic / Roman quarry at Gozo College Middle School, *Triq Fortunato Mizzi*, Rabat, Gozo**

Extensive ancient quarry remains, large vaulted cisterns, a cluster of intact amphorae and the ruins of an early modern farmhouse were discovered during archaeological investigations being carried out in preparation for the extension of the Middle School at Rabat, Gozo. The state of preservation of this ancient quarrying is excellent despite the construction of the school grounds and car park over it in the 1960s. Fortunately, at the time, no basement was cut and the foundations were laid directly on the bedrock formed by the ancient quarry. This quarry probably forms part of the ancient quarry discovered underneath the adjacent school during the works for its conversion into the Gozo Museum. It is being tentatively dated to the Late Punic period on the basis of a preliminary analysis of a cluster of amphorae found on site. The presence of these amphorae, mostly intact, was unexpected given that the site was already heavily developed, and the survival of such fragile artefacts is unusual.

Initial studies by the Superintendence indicate that the ashlar were extracted by ancient traditional manual methods. Such methods were still employed in local quarrying up to the introduction of machinery in the early 20th century, though in more recent times the size of the ashlar is much smaller. This ancient quarry is about one to two metres deep and has two distinct characteristics: the serrated and terraced uncut blocks, some defined with the distinctive narrow channel around them, which was cut to separate the block from bedrock; and the negative void of the extracted blocks, which are represented by the tell-tale marks on the quarry bed. The quarry cuts and unfinished blocks still in situ indicate that various types of blocks are being quarried including the ashlar, slabs and possibly corbels. Evidence of stone dressing on site is also evident. Two vaulted cisterns, each connected to two wells has also been discovered within the quarry. This is currently being studied to understand whether it was constructed contemporaneously to the quarry activity or is of a more recent date.

The destination of the stone blocks from this quarry was possibly for building projects in the ancient city of Gaulos in the location of the present *Cittadella* and Rabat in view of its proximity. Both the island and its city *Gaulos/Gaudos* are mentioned in ancient Greco-Roman texts by Diodorus Siculus (1st century BC), Strabo (1st century BC/AD), Pliny the Elder (1st century AD), Ptolemy (1st century AD) and Procopius (6th century AD) amongst others. Of particular interest to Gozo in this context is the Punic inscription known as the *Melitensia* Quinta (CIS, 1, 132) discovered in Gozo, as it actually mentions the keeper or inspector of the quarries, although the location of these is not inferred in the inscription and cannot be attributed to the site in question with any certainty.





*Ancient quarry remains, later period cisterns and remains of a farmhouse at Gozo College Middle School, Triq Fortunato Mizzi, Rabat, Gozo (Photo Source: Joseph Grima)*





*Aerial view of ancient quarry remains, later period cisterns and remains of a farmhouse at Gozo College Middle School, Triq Fortunato Mizzi, Rabat, Gozo (Photo Source: Joseph Grima)*





*Cluster of ancient amphorae uncovered at Gozo College Middle School, Triq Fortunato Mizzi, Rabat, Gozo (Photo Source: Joseph Grima)*





*Close up of an ancient amphora found on site at Gozo College Middle School, Triq Fortunato Mizzi, Rabat, Gozo (Photo Source: Joseph Grima)*



## Catacombs at *Ghajn Qajjet*, Rabat, Malta

Two catacombs were discovered during archaeological monitoring of an approved development at *Ghajn Qajjet* in the limits of Rabat, Malta. The archaeological significance of the area of *Ghajn Qajjet* and its surroundings is of the utmost significance and has been known since at least the seventeenth century when Giovanni Francesco Abela reported the discovery of a number of Phoenician tombs in the nearby *Ghar Barka* area in his 1647 *Della Descrittione di Malta*. In relatively more recent times, it is estimated that more than sixty Phoenician tombs were discovered in the immediate area of *Ghajn Klieb* and *Ghajn Qajjet* between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Another catacomb was discovered just a few years ago during road works on the road separating *Ghajn Klieb* and *Ghajn Qajjet*. An initial probe of one of these catacombs have yielded a very high amount of pottery including material culture possibly from the tenth and eleventh centuries. The Superintendence and the project's architect are currently collaborating in designing a technical solution that will integrate the catacombs within the approved development and maintain a controlled access to these features. The Superintendence is planning to excavate one of these catacombs in early 2021 and to leave the second one for future research.



Rock cut staircase leading to a catacomb at *Ghajn Qajjet*, Rabat Malta



A window tomb or *arcosolia* at Ghajn Qajjet, Rabat Malta





*Possibly an Islamic amphora base dating to the medieval period*

## Manoel Island

The archaeological investigations at Manoel Island continued throughout 2020 to discover, document, preserve and integrate the cultural heritage on Manoel Island within the development being carried out by MIDI plc.

Very little cultural heritage was discovered in the extensive area between the historic cemeteries and the bridge connecting the island to the mainland. This area is mostly characterised by post-war land reclamation as evident from the contents of the debris fill. No archaeological features were identified within the exposed bedrock in this area. Further investigations in the area of the historic cemeteries revealed remains of formal pathways connecting the sites to each other. In addition, the excavations in this area exposed the ruins of an apparently late nineteenth-century cattle-shed built directly adjacent to one of the British period cemeteries. This is interesting since both features were in use contemporaneously throwing light on period mortuary practices in a contested space.

The excavations revealed the presence of a possibly seventeenth-century cemetery along the shore facing Ta' Xbiex. This cemetery is characterised by what appear to be mass or informal burials. This together with the traces of lime found in various instances together with human remains suggest that these burials were a hurried affair and may well be a plague cemetery dating to 1676 when Manoel Island was first used for quarantine practices. Some trenches revealed deposits of ancient pottery. However, this requires further investigation to ascertain their context, significance and whether these are primary or secondary deposits. The cemetery was found to be truncated in parts by the British period plague hospital, a sentry post and gate, a cattle-shed and infrastructural services like historic drainage culverts. The cemetery was found to be bounded by a well-preserved sea-wall built in dressed masonry along the side fronting the shore. The sea-wall bears traces of multiperiod extensions and repairs. This is very interesting because it does not only show that the sea was originally much further inland than it is today but that the cemetery was perched directly onto the littoral. Port infrastructure such as cannon bollards and mooring chains were found still in situ.

It is envisaged that most of the archaeological investigation of this side of Manoel Island will be concluded in 2021 with the investigation of the land between the historic cemeteries and the Lazzaretto buildings and the completion of a few remaining surgical excavations to answer specific research questions. Midi architects and consultants are working alongside the Superintendence to redesign parts of the project to allow the preservation and integration of the discovered sites.



## Ancient structural remains and deposits at a site in *Triq San Pawl*, Rabat, Malta

Archaeologically monitored works being carried out in an early twentieth century house uncovered remains of a ceramic drain pipe and a *cocciopesto* floor bounded on one side by a c. 1.7m four courses high *franka* ashlar wall with a door threshold in hardstone. These structures were found at about 3m below present street level. A trefoil shape well datable to the Roman period was also discovered underneath these structures. Another well was found nearby but could not be investigated at this point in time. Some ashlar, clearly not in situ, were reutilised as foundations for the present house.

The pottery recovered from this deposit appears to be mostly late Roman. Investigation of an ancient trench cut into the *cocciopesto* floor revealed the presence of intact pottery wedged partially in the bedding fill of the *cocciopesto*. In addition, a set of four bronze coins have been found above the *cocciopesto* floor together with the remains of some ivory pins, a *quadrans* / *ternucius* (3 *unciae*) bronze weight and a *franka* 'ball' (c. 16cm diameter). Two of the coins have been preliminary identified as fourth century follis, one portraying on the obverse the Emperor Constantine (306 – 330 AD) and another the Emperor Valens (364 – 378 AD). Comparative assessment of the *ternucius* weight suggests that it is datable to the 4th/5th century. The finds appear to be quite temporally homogeneous. The pottery, the coins, and the *ternucius* all point to a late 4th century AD context. It is understandable that the coins in themselves can only provide a *terminus post quem*. However, these types of coins were very common unlike higher-end coins and did not generally circulate for exceptional long periods.

These finds are currently undergoing a cleaning and conservation process by the Superintendence. Further studies and identification will take place in 2021 at the end of the conservation process. In what is a first for the Superintendence, the conservation officers of the Superintendence have intervened directly to conserve and consolidate the *cocciopesto* floor which was in a state of deterioration. The Superintendence has engaged fully with the project's architect and owner to redesign the structural foundations to conserve fully the structural remains which will be integrated fully with the proposed development.

## Central Link

A number of archaeological discoveries were made during the archaeological monitoring of the Central Link Project. The remains of a Punic-Roman tomb, a number of cart ruts, old quarries, cisterns and wells, an extensive agricultural landscape and a relatively complex late nineteenth century water management system were discovered across the length of the project.

The Punic-Roman tomb truncated sometime in the past was found empty of any funerary artefacts or human remains. The preservation of the tomb in situ was not possible since the projected road could not be shifted enough or its levels significantly altered at this point to save the tomb. Therefore, following months of discussion and planning – this being a first attempt of its kind in Malta - the Superintendence together with Infrastructure Malta embarked on the delicate operation of extracting the remains of a classical period tomb in its entirety from the path of the new Central Link road and placing it within the immediate vicinity, preserving its context. Such a drastic measure is generally a last resort and was only taken due to the national priority of the road project but without losing sight of the duty to preserve national heritage. This strikes a balance between the preservation of cultural heritage and the need for better infrastructure in line with established international practice.

In the vicinity of the tombs, a rock-cut cistern was discovered filled with building debris consisting of large size ashlar masonry normally associated with Classical period buildings. The cistern has been integrated within a nearby field. These masonry blocks were salvaged, recorded and will be displayed next to the tomb for public enjoyment. Other archaeological features, such as ancient rock-cut agricultural trenches, post holes, irrigation channels, quarries and cart-ruts were also discovered, documented and preserved under the Central Link project with minor changes in the levels of the road.

A number of interconnected wells and cisterns were found along and on the sides of *Triq il-Belt Valletta* in the *Ta' Qali* area. These appear to form part of the Boschetto and *Għajn Klieb* Aqueduct conducted by the British colonial administration in 1878. These works form part of a larger effort to supplement the volume of potable water into Valletta brought in by the Wignacourt aqueduct and to bring in running water to other parts of the island. Some of these wells and cisterns were found long disused. They were all recorded and the majority were preserved and also brought into use again.

Monitored works in the junction connecting *Triq l-Imdina* with *Triq il-Linja* in Attard found that the west side of San Salvatore embankment still survives largely intact together with the small bridge across *Wied Rmiedi*. Exploratory trenches running across the street indicate that the east side of the embankment did not survive. The Superintendence has collaborated with Infrastructure Malta to redesign this part of the project to preserve and valorise these elements of Malta's industrial heritage.



## **Major road infrastructural works at *Marsa/Paola Junction, Vjal Santa Luċija, Vjal Sir Paul Boffa, Triq Garibaldi, Triq Aldo Moro, Triq il-Labour, Triq Ħal Qormi, Industrial Estate, Marsa***

Most archaeological related monitoring in this major road work was concluded in 2020. Works also started on the shelter hoods to provide controlled public access to the tombs within the reinstated landscape area at Sta Lucia. The major discoveries in this project in 2020 were the discovery of a large ancient silo pit and a historic storm water culvert outside the Santa Maria Addolorata Cemetery. A large concentration of material culture and faunal remains were excavated from the silo pit which is being preserved within the landscaped area of the road works. The pottery and faunal remains have not yet been studied but a preliminary assessment suggests a Punic-Roman phase. The culvert which drained storm water running down from cemetery is partially rock cut and partially constructed in large well-crafted voussoirs. Restoration works to mitigate damage caused to the culvert during the works is planned for early 2021.

## **Ancient brick work at *Il-Wesgħa tal-Mużew, Rabat, Malta***

The site is located with the area of the medieval Saracenic cemetery in Rabat part of which extended on the remains of the Roman Domus. Evidence of these burials were found on this site during previous investigations. Archaeological excavations carried out in 2020 uncovered a four courses high opening (c. 30cm x 30cm) constructed in franka blocks on top of bedrock. Brick walls, possibly Roman, align the insides of the underlying gallery. The purpose of this gallery has not be ascertained yet. The feature, which could not be investigated any further at the time due to limited resources, has been fully preserved.

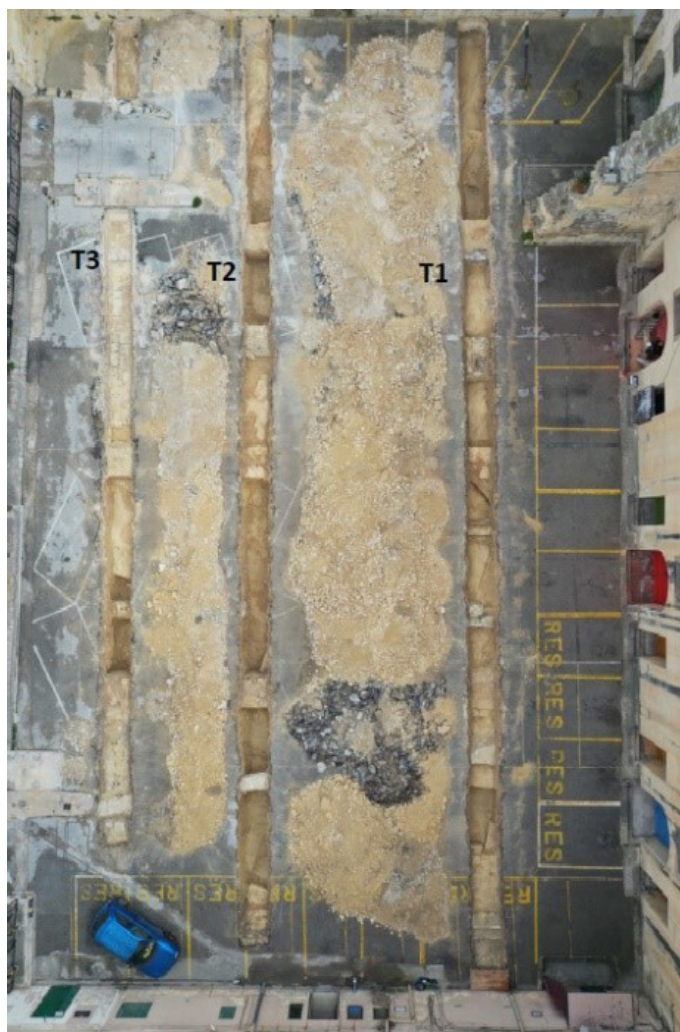


*The built opening with the underlying gallery lined in brick work at Il-Wesgħa tal-Mużew, Rabat Malta*



## Pinto Stores, Floriana

Trial trenches were carried out within the present car park behind the reconstructed elevation of Pinto Stores to identify the survival, if any, of the remains of the original vaults that were demolished because of bombing during the Second World War. The foundations walls of the vaults and extensive patches of the original flagstone flooring have been uncovered. Discussions are underway with the project's architect how to best conserve these features in view of the proposed development on site.



*Orthophoto of trial trenches conducted at the back of Pinto stores (left) and an extensive patch of original flagstone flooring of one of the vaults (right) (Photo source: Karl Hallett, JB ARCH)*

## Airport Grounds, Luqa

Archaeological features were uncovered during monitoring of engineering works being carried out within the airport runway grounds. These features, some of which may be associated with the prehistoric remains of *Ta' Debdieba* that was rediscovered last year, consist of an extensive landscape of agricultural trenches, post holes, cart-ruts and several silo pits. Some of the silos discovered in this site are interconnected. A few of the silo pits had mixed and disturbed deposits. However, others provided secure contexts that yielded faunal remains and very significant amounts of pottery, including intact vessels, ranging from prehistoric to Roman and medieval. One particular silo pit was also used for inhumation. Further studies are currently being undertaken to understand better the historic phasing of these features. In addition, environmental samples were taken in view of the excellent condition of some of the deposits to analyse the faunal and floral remains. Extensive collaboration between the Superintendence, the project's architects and the airport's management has led to devise solutions that preserve the majority of these features whilst permitting the necessary upgrading of this critical infrastructure.



*A pair of cart-ruts truncated by later agricultural or quarrying activity at Airport Grounds, Luqa (Photo source: Charlene Ader, JB ARCH)*





*A series of post-holes next to an alignment of connected agricultural trenches (left) and three interconnected silo pits (right) (Photo source: Charlene Ader, JB ARCH)*



*An inhumed skeleton at the bottom of one of the silo pits (Photo source: Charlene Ader, JB ARCH)*



## Second World War Shelters

Eighteen Second World War shelters were found during various construction, infrastructural and road works in 2020. The existence of some of these shelters was already known to the Superintendence since they are recorded in the official shelter surveys at the Public Works. Others, mostly small private shelters, were never recorded before. Some of these shelters were discovered during archaeological monitoring. However, a significant number were reported by the architects, developers or third parties. A significant number of these shelters were rediscovered during road works. Some of these were completely sealed underneath the tarmac. Others still had the capping slabs above street level and thus could be accessed easily.

Two nearby shelters were rediscovered in *Triq Santa Monika* in Pieta'. Both shelters had lost part of the entrance ceiling during subsequent road and infrastructural works and were found completely infilled with debris. The smaller of these shelters run mostly underneath a private property although it apparently had an entrance from the street. The other shelter had three access points and is extensively decorated by a series of bas-reliefs in niches. These sculptures are being attributed to the Msida-born artist Fredu Azzopardi (1880-1949) on stylistic grounds, the level of finesse of the carvings, and on the basis that other similar niches known to have been executed by Azzopardi are found in other nearby shelters in Msida and Pieta'. Azzopardi is better known for the many carving works at the Msida Church, Balluta Buildings, Orpheum Theatre in Gzira and at Cafe Premier in Valletta. The shelter has been scanned in 3D with the assistance of Prof. Saviour Formosa (University of Malta) and plaster casts of the sculptures were taken by Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna to be displayed at Malta at War Museum at Couvre Porte, Birgu. The shelter entrances and initial corridor are just a few centimetres below the street level. The Superintendence collaborated with the engineers and contractors of Infrastructure Malta in devising a structural solution to roof over the shelter entrances without risking their physical integrity and access, and without hindering the rebuilding of the road or jeopardising road safety.

One shelter, in Msida, was extensively damaged during development works with the loss of a chamber and part of the corridor. The Superintendence is currently liaising with the project's architect to record, mitigate and recover as much as possible of the shelter's historic fabric.

A small air raid shelter was found during the Central Link Project works near the entrance of the Government Nursery at *Wied Incita*. This appears to be a military shelter associated with the RAF station at Attard, today utilised as an industrial estate. Evidence of mechanically induced rock cutting supports this position since the availability of such tools in wartime Malta was primarily reserved to the military forces.

Locality	Number of Shelters discovered
Attard	1
Birkirkara	1
Dingli	1
Haż-Żebbug	2
Kirkop	2
Lija	1
Mellieha	1
Mosta	1
Msida	2
Pieta'	2
Qormi	2
Qrendi	1
Żurrieq	2

**Figure 5:** *Number of shelters by locality discovered in 2020*

## Built Heritage monitoring

In line with the Cultural Heritage Act, the Superintendence continued its role in surveillance and monitoring of conservation and restoration of built heritage. In 2020, the Building Restoration Inspectorate (BRI) consisted of four professional officers, specialised and conversant in-built heritage and cultural heritage conservation practices and an administrative assistant. The BRI is set to be further augmented in 2021.

The main business functions of the Building Restoration Inspectorate are to:

1. Provide professional advice related to restoration practices of built heritage to the Superintendence in line with international standards and practice on restoration;
2. Assess and review Restoration and Works Method Statements (RMSs / WMSs) during the consultation stages of the planning development application process;
3. Assess and review Dangerous Structures (heritage buildings only) and advise the Planning Authority;
4. Formulate and communicate to the Planning Authority the development permit conditions (including Bank Guarantees) to ensure that the built heritage is safeguarded during development; (monitor restoration works, including trial patches before cleaning works and routine monitoring to ensure works are in line with the approved methodology;)
5. Provide professional assistance to periti during restoration – such as the need for changes to the approved methodology and plans;
6. Ensure the documentation of updates on progress of restoration projects.



## Review of RMS / WMS

The Building Restoration Inspectorate saw a further increase in the number of Restoration and Work Method Statements (RMSs and WMSs). In 2020 the combined number of RMSs and WMSs assessed rose by 21% to **1601** compared to the 1323 processed in the previous year. The increase in the number of assessed RMSs was mainly due to the *Irrestawra Darek* scheme for Scheduled Grade 1 and Grade 2 buildings and within Urban Conservation Areas that is financed and administered by the Planning Authority.

A significant increase over the previous years was also noted in the number of inspections carried out in connection with the monitoring of restoration and rehabilitation works within heritage buildings, as well as development applications monitored. During 2020, notwithstanding the limitations resulting from the pandemic and without any increase in human resources, the Building Restoration Inspectorate increased its presence on the ground and conducted **2102** inspections to monitor restoration and rehabilitation works within heritage buildings (including major projects); a marked increase of 90% when compared to the previous year (1091 inspections). The Building Restoration Inspectorate handled **20** cases in support of the Enforcement Directorate of the Planning Authority.

In 2020, the Superintendence recommended to the Planning Commission the release of **226** cases related to restoration compliance bank guarantees and *Irrestawra Darek* grants associated with restoration works compared to the 335 that were processed in the previous year (a decrease of 23%). This decrease in the number of clearances of bank guarantees and *Irrestawra Darek* grants processed by the Superintendence is probably the result of less building restoration works being completed during 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The requests to release the associated bank guarantees and the grants are expected to increase during 2021 as a direct result of the substantial increase in RMSs and WMSs processed in 2020 and the improved efficiency of the specialised officers at the Superintendence.

		2018	2019	2020
1	Review of Restoration and Works Method Statement (RMSs + WMSs)	1209	1323	1601
2	Built heritage monitoring site inspections	883	1091	2102
3	Release of Bank Guarantee and <i>Irrestawra Darek</i> Grants	99	335	226

**Figure 6:** Statistics covering 2018, 2019 and 2020 in relation to built heritage restoration

## European Committee for Standardization (CEN) on restoration and conservation

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage started participating in the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) for restoration and conservation under the aegis of the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (MCCA) in 2020. The Superintendence is collaborating with the University of Malta (UoM), Restoration Directorate, Planning Authority and Heritage Malta in the drafting and compiling of European Standards for restoration and conservation. Together with the other entities, the Superintendence provides its expertise to this international endeavour to achieve a holistic, comprehensive and unified regulatory framework and common terminology for cultural heritage conservation across the European Union.

The Superintendence collaborated on the following standards for conservation of cultural heritage:

1. Investigation and monitoring of archaeological deposits for preservation in situ;
2. Specifications for the management of movable cultural heritage collections;
3. Finishes of built heritage – investigation and documentation;
4. Procedures for the analytical evaluation and selection of cleaning methods for porous inorganic materials used in cultural heritage.

## Register to the *Bord tal-Warrants tar-Restawraturi*

The Built Heritage Inspectorate acts as Register to the *Bord tal-Warrants tar-Restawraturi* (henceforth the **Bord**). On behalf of the **Bord**, the Register has processed a total of 59 valid applications which have resulted in 25 Restorers/Conservators being awarded the warrant during 2020. As Register, the Built Heritage Inspectorate handles most administration support duties to the Bord including:

1. Handling all communication with applicants;
2. Handling general queries from applicants/non-applicants;
3. Preparing information material for publication;
4. Assisting the Bord in its functions, including interviews with applicants;
5. Attending board meeting;
6. Organisation and presentation of all data.



## Major Restoration Monitoring in 2020

The following major restoration cases are a selection that were monitored by the Building Restoration Inspectorate during 2020.

Old railway embankment	Attard
Parish Church	Attard
Balzan Parish Church,	Balzan
Auberge de France	Birgu
Stepped Wing Bastion	Birgu
Farsons Brewery	Birkirkara
Bikirkara Parish Church,	Birkirkara
St George's Redoubt	Birżebbuġa
Sta.Margherita Lines	Bormla
St. Paul, St. John Almonier and Notre Dame Bastions, Cottonera Lines	Bormla
Windmill at St John Almonier Bastion	Bormla
Former Ships Company's Quarters and Stores, Bastion Wall, Xatt ir-Rizq	Bormla
Floriana Parish Church	Floriana
St Francis Bastion	Floriana
Tal-Ġordan Lighthouse	Għasri
Fort Manoel - ditch, bastions, counterscarps, glacis and out-erworks	Gzira
St Michael Bastion, Senglea Gate and Landfront, Clocktower and Belveder area	Isla
Fort Ricasoli	Kalkara
St Thomas Tower	Marsascula
Delimara Lighthouse	Marsaxlokk
Outerworks at Fort Tas-Silġ	Marsaxlokk
Palazzo Gourgion	Mdina
Westreme Battery - Tunnara	Mellieha
Torri Abjad	Mellieha
Mosta Parish Church	Mosta

Mtarfa Clocktower	Mtarfa
Tal-Ħniena Chapel	Qrendi
Villa Lugisland	Rabat
Barriera Wharf	Valletta
Customs House	Valletta
Grand Harbour Breakwater	Valletta
Old Abbatoir	Valletta
Old University	Valletta
Manoel Theatre	Valletta
School of Art	Valletta
St Augustine Parish Church	Valletta
St Francis Church	Valletta
St John's Co Cathedral	Valletta
St Paul Anglican Pro-Cathedral	Valletta
Windmill	Xewkija
Xlendi Tower	Xlendi

**Figure 7:** A selection of major restoration cases that were monitored by the Built Heritage Monitoring Inspectorate during 2020





*Attard Church after restoration*





*Detail of Attard Church after restoration*





*Restoration of Attard railway embankment*

Amongst the above examples, the Superintendence would like to highlight the following cases of best practice restoration.

## Balzan Parish Church

The monitoring of restoration works of the façades of the Balzan Parish Church marked close collaboration between the Foundation for the Cultural Patrimony of the Archdiocese of Malta, Balzan Parish, Restoration Directorate, Heritage Malta's Diagnostic Laboratory and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. Analysis carried out at Heritage Malta's laboratories permitted the identification of the original colour scheme of the main portal which has been restored to its original appearance, highlighting the beauty of this fine eighteenth century church which is scheduled as a Grade 1 monument.



Balzan Church after restoration



## Palazzo Gourgion, Mdina

The ongoing restoration at Palazzo Gourgion in Mdina is a good example of best practice restoration that merits particular mention. Consolidation works including new pointing was carried out very carefully, where necessary without affecting the patina of the rest of the façade. A light *velatura* was applied where pointing works have been carried out to homogenise with the rest of the façade resulting in an aesthetically very pleasing outlook without compromising the historic fabric.

## Mtarfa Clocktower

The Superintendence monitored and engaged heavily in the restoration works of the British period Mtarfa clocktower which covered not only the turret but also the clock and its mechanism. The Mtarfa clock tower was built in 1895 and is equipped with a mechanical movement and chiming train manufactured in England by Gillett & Johnston Clockmakers of Croydon, Surrey. The clock mechanism is complemented by three bells also cast by Gillett & Johnston who were at the time branching also into bell-founding.

The restoration project undertaken by the Mtarfa Clock Council addressed failing mortar joints in the turret structure and the replacement of structurally compromised steel-reinforced concrete roofs and broken masonry in the corbelling elements of the turret. Dismantling of the eroded copper clock dials and the driving and chiming mechanism took place after a detailed documentation process. A small part of the mechanism had to be replaced by a faithful replica by a qualified clockmaker. Further works were undertaken on the ferrous fittings supporting the bells in place including the renovation of the drop mallets that chime the bells. The whole mechanism is currently at assembly stage and yet to be calibrated together with the clock bells at the apex of the turret. These works will be concluded in the coming year.

## Surveillance and Enforcement

As part of its regulatory function and in keeping with its role at law, the Superintendence is also responsible to carry out surveillance to ensure the protection of the cultural heritage which may come about:

1. By officials of the Superintendence during the implementation of their duties;
2. Further to accidental archaeological discoveries made during works carried out that may impact on the cultural heritage;
3. In response to third party reports from the public or police informing of damage (or threat of damage) to the cultural heritage.

Any of the above situations necessitate a site inspection and may require direct enforcement by the Superintendence. Where necessary, the Superintendence issues a 'Conservation and Protection Order' or a 'notification to stop works'. Subsequent imposition of conditions or measures to safeguard the cultural heritage may follow. Depending on the nature and circumstances of the infringement the Superintendence may liaise with the Enforcement Directorate of the Planning Authority, or request police action.

No full-time officer was dedicated to this function in 2020 although plans are underway to strengthen this role. Notwithstanding, in 2020 the Superintendence implemented its surveillance function on at least **27** occasions. These cases were intervened upon by the Superintendence's restoration and archaeology monitoring teams. Several emergencies and infringements were avoided by early detection by the Superintendence's vigilance, pre-empting damage.

## Compromise Fine Mechanism

The Superintendence, with the support of the Planning Authority, apply the Compromised Fine mechanism under the Development Planning Act (2016) for development projects implemented in breach of the obligatory archaeological monitoring conditions as required by the development permits. In other cases, the proponents failed to report the discovery of cultural heritage features as required by law. This mechanism was introduced as a deterrent to reduce the risk of non-compliance to permit conditions requiring archaeological monitoring.

The settlement of the Compromised Fine is necessary for the Planning Authority to issue the compliance certificate at end of works by which the applicant would be able to obtain the provision of water and electricity to the premises. During 2020, **41** cases were presented by the Superintendence to the Planning Authority which in turn fined the applicant. These fines amounted to a total of c. **€282,000** and are administered by the Planning Authority. This contrast noticeably to 2019 when 80 cases were fined for a total of c. €500,000. This markedly downturn trend is considered positive as it is attributed to the efficiency of this mechanism to deter non-compliance with the cultural heritage obligations set in the development permit conditions.





## 4. Protection and Guardianship of Museums and Sites



# Statutory Protection of Heritage Buildings and Archaeological Sites

Building up on procedures which were set up in 2019, the Superintendence proceeded with commending for scheduling to the Planning Authority those sites and buildings which merit protection, in line with the provision of Article 58 of the Cultural Heritage Act (2019). Procedures are now well in place between the Superintendence and the Planning Authority for the appropriate management of the scheduling agenda. Throughout 2020, officers from the Heritage Data Management and Research Unit within the Superintendence submitted various scheduling proposals to the Planning Authority. A total of **56** sites have been scheduled and published as follows:

- 32 & 33, *Triq il-Karmnu, San Ġiljan* (GN 152 of 2020 published on 4th February and GN 1315 of 2020 published on 10th November)
- Amendments to scheduling boundaries at Pietà (GN 430 of 2020 published on 28th April)
  - *Iż-Żona li tinsab wara l-Knisja tal-Madonna ta' Fatima Triq Santa Monika Tal-Pietà*
  - *Iż-Żona li tinsab wara Nri. 13, 14, Casa Guardamangia Telghet Gwardamanga Tal-Pietà*
  - *Iż-Żona li tinsab wara Nru. 64, Appartamento 1 u 2, Villa Calypso Telghet Gwardamanga Tal-Pietà*
  - *Iż-Żona li tinsab wara Nri. 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62 Telghet Gwardamanga Tal-Pietà*
  - *Iż-Żona li tinsab wara Nri. 46, 48, Cassar Telghet Gwardamanga Tal-Pietà*
  - *Iż-Żona li tinsab wara Dar Ida Telghet Gwardamanga Tal-Pietà Grad 2*
  - *Nru. 28 Telghet Gwardamanga Tal-Pietà*
- 201, *Triq id-Dejqa, Valletta* (GN 430 of 2020 published on 28th April)
- Upgrading of scheduling of Villa Frere and Gardens, *Triq ix-Xatt tal-Pietà* (GN 515 of 2020 published on 22nd May)
- Burial Cavities at *Triq il-Qaċċa, Xagħra* (GN 835 of 2020 published on 21st July)
- 34 properties at Saqqajja Area (GN 883 of 2020 published on 21st July)
- *Villa Testaferrata Bonici, Triq John Borg, Żejtun* (GN 1013 of 2020 published on 1st September)
- 15, *Triq il-Wilġa, San Lawrenz* (GN 1052 of 2020 published on 11th September)
- 60, *Triq Luqa Briffa, Żejtun* (GN 1052 of 2020 published on 11th September)
- 6, *Triq l-Għarb, Għarb* (GN 1079 of 2020 published on 18th September)
- 6 Medieval Chapels with an archaeological buffer zone (GN 1239 of 2020 published on 23rd October)
  - *Santa Duminka, Dingli*
  - *Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuħ, Gudja*
  - *Tas-Sanċir, Rabat*
  - *Tal-Wasla tal-Familja Mqaddsa mill-Eġittu, Kemmuna*
  - *Santa Marija ta' Hal Xluq, Siggiewi*
  - *Santa Marija tas-Sokkors, Bormla*
- Including an archaeological buffer zone for the first 5 properties
- *Villa Ciantar Triq ix-Xatt, Pietà* (GN 1237 of 2020 published on 3rd November)



Apart from submitting proposals for new scheduling as outlined above, the Superintendence was also requested to attend the Executive Council of the Planning Authority on a number of other scheduling related matters, amongst which the proposal for instituting a buffer zone around Villa Barbaro, Tarxien and the request to alter the scheduling outline of Villa Curmi, Żejtun. In the case of the former, the Superintendence agreed in principle to the addition of a Buffer Zone to further protect the setting of Villa Barbaro. In the case of the latter, the Superintendence strongly argued against any reduction to the scheduling of the scheduling extent of Villa Curmi, which position was acceded to by the Planning Authority's Executive Council.



*A rock-cut burial tomb located in Maghtab which has been proposed for scheduling at Class 2 to the Planning Authority further to a data-capturing exercise carried out by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage in 2020*





*Cart-ruts located in Mtarfa. The area contained several pairs of cart-ruts, sometimes intersecting each other. The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage has completed a data-capturing exercise in 2020 with the aim of proposing its scheduling in 2021*



Throughout 2020, the Superintendence noted a rise in the submission of requests for scheduling by the owners of the properties themselves. Though beneficial, since it demonstrates a level of increased awareness of the importance to protect cultural heritage and the tools available to do so, this has also created further strain on scheduling procedures. Scheduling procedures are in themselves already very lengthy in view of the possibility for owners and affected third parties to submit requests for reconsideration from scheduling as well as appeals against scheduling, as provided for by the Planning and Development Act of 2016 (Note: Scheduling is a legislative tool providing statutory protection to sites and buildings under the provisions of the Development Planning Act). As per newly established procedure, it is the Superintendence which argues against submitted reconsideration and appeals, and in so doing alienating its resources from proposing new scheduling. Reconsideration requests, but more so appeals, can be extended over several months with some cases taking years to be decided. As at the end of 2020, the Superintendence is involved in **11** cases of reconsideration from previous scheduling decisions and **5** appeal cases currently managed by the Plannin Authority, in which the Superintendence is consulted regularly.

## Guardianship Deeds

During 2020 the Superintendence continued processing **40** new deed request and **1** renewal application which were received during previous years. In July 2020, **1** guardianship deed – WWII Shelter at Sta Ubaldesca Street (Fondazzjoni Wirt Paola) – expired and was not renewed for a further term.

In 2020 the Superintendence also received **9** new requests for government-owned historical properties to be transferred in guardianship. The requests were made by 7 different entities, 6 of which do not yet hold the historical properties requested in title through a guardianship deed.

The 9 historical properties requested (7 in number) in guardianship in 2020 were the following:

- *Il-Mithna il-Qadima* / Jesus of Nazareth Windmill located in Triq il-Mithna, Mosta
- *Il-Mithna tal-Mahlut* / *Ta' Ganu* Windmill located in Triq il-Bwieraq, Birkirkara
- Australian Bungalow located in *Ghammieri*, Marsa
- *Il-Batterija tal-Qolla l-Bajda* / *Qbajjar Battery* located in Triq il-Batterija, Żebbuġ (Gozo)
- *Barriera Wharf* (Old Pixkerija) located in *Xatt il-Barriera*, Valletta
- Della Grazie Battery located in Triq Dwardu Ellul, Xgħajra
- St Nicholas Chapel located in Triq ir-Rinella, Kalkara

Two of the historical properties mentioned above have been requested in guardianship by more than one entity. The decision on which entity will be granted a deed will primarily rest on the assessment of the proposal put forward for the restoration, management, care and use of the site. Ultimately it remains the prerogative of the Minister responsible for cultural heritage with the consent of the Minister responsible for Lands to authorise the Superintendent to enter into a guardianship deed on behalf of the State.

The proposals handled during 2020 are at different stages of the adjudication process. No new deeds or renewals were concluded during 2020. By end 2020 the total number of active guardianship deeds stood at **19**.



*General view of the Il-Miṭṭna tal-Maḥlut / Ta' Ganu Windmill, Birkirkara*





*General view of the Australian Bungalow in its present context at Għammieri, Marsa (Photo source: Din I-Art Helwa)*

## Status of Guardianship Deeds

**Figure 8** below shows the status of the signed Guardianship Deeds up till the end of 2020.

	Name of Cultural Property	Locality	Name of Guardian	Year of Signature
1	Qalet Marku Tower	Naxxar	Din I-Art Helwa	2003 / Renewed 2013
2	Għallis Tower	Naxxar	Din I-Art Helwa	2003 / Renewed 2013
3	Red Tower (aka Sta Agatha Tower)	Mellieha	Din I-Art Helwa	2003 / Renewed 2013
4	Wignacourt Tower	San Pawl il-Baħar	Din I-Art Helwa	2003 / Renewed 2013
5	Mamo Tower	Marsaskala	Din I-Art Helwa	2003 / Renewed 2013
6	Santa Maria Tower	Għajnsielem	Din I-Art Helwa	2003 / Renewed 2013

7	Dwejra Tower	San Lawrenz	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013
8	Santa Maria Battery	Ghajnsielem	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013
9	Msida Bastion Cemetery	Floriana	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2003 / Renewed 2013
10	Lascaris War Headquarters Complex	Valletta	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2009/ Renewal still in progress
11	Couvre Porte Barracks at Vittoriosa(10 rooms at lower level) and underlying WWII shelter	Vittoriosa	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2011
12	Our Lady of Victory Church	Valletta	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2011
13	Wied Iż-Żurrieq Tower	Qrendi	Din l-Art Ħelwa	2013
14	Fort Rinella	Kalkara	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
15	Madliena Tower and adjacent structures, Room off Mediterranean Street and Bridge and Weir	Pembroke	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
16	Tower at Triq il-Wiesgha	Xagħjra	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
17	Three World War II Pill Boxes: Reserve Post R15 (Naxxar), AB1 Beach post (Mellieha) and RAO beach post (Kalkara)	Naxxar Mellieha Kalkara	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
18	Notre Dame Gate	Vittoriosa	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016
19	St Thomas Tower	Marsaskala	Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna	2016

**Figure 8:** *Status of Guardianship Deeds at the end of 2020*





## 5. Movable Heritage Control



## Import and Export of Cultural Goods

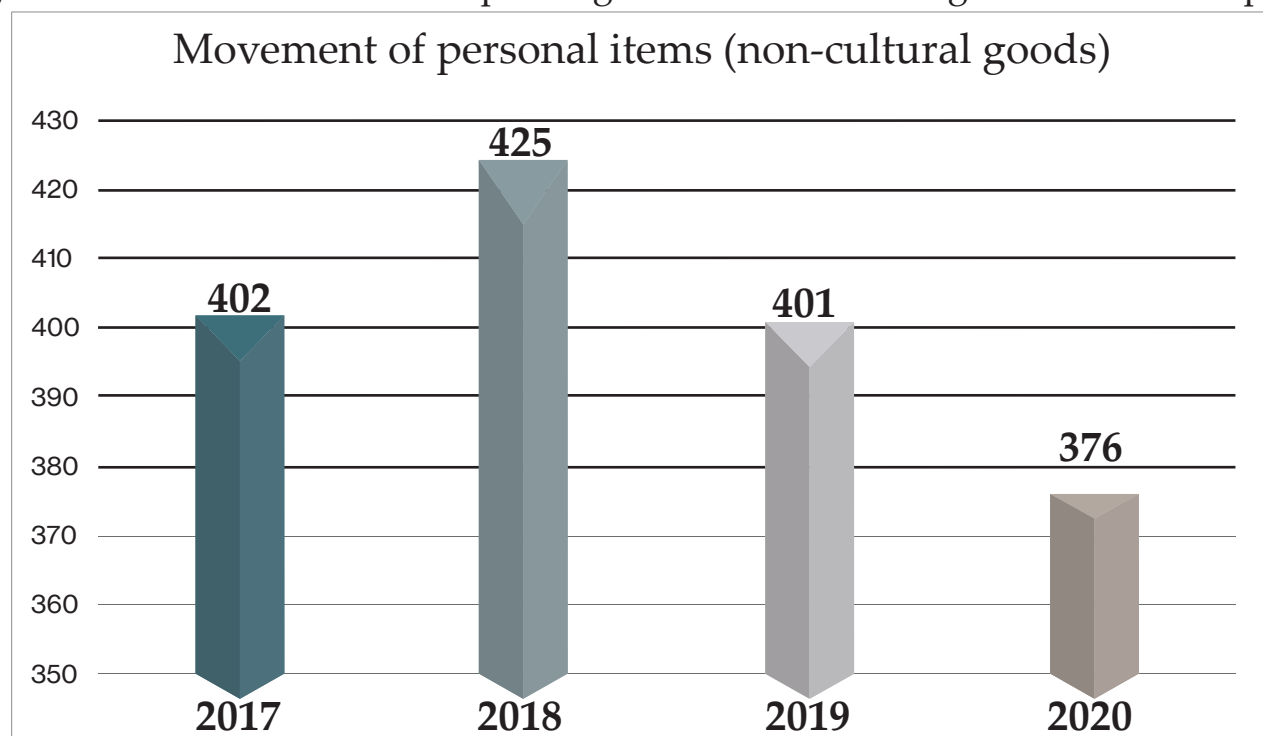
The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage regulates the import and export of cultural goods moving between Malta and EU Member States, as well as from, or to non-EU countries. These cases are referred to the Superintendence by the Customs Department, shipping companies or Malta Post.

This work is mainly carried out by one Superintendence officer who is assigned to tasks related to movable heritage. However, late in the year another officer started training in the area. In 2020 the Superintendence introduced processing fees for applications pertaining to the permanent export of non-cultural personal effects, standard processing fee being €35, and €65 in case of express service.

### Certification for the Movement of Goods (personal items excluding cultural heritage objects)

The Superintendence also reviews the export and movement of “personal items”, to ensure that these items do not include cultural heritage items.

In the course of 2020, the Superintendence reviewed **376** cases of export and movement, in which cases the exporter had declared that no item of cultural heritage was being exported. The number of cases marked a slight decrease on previous years, being 25 cases less than in 2019 (**401** cases) and 49 cases less than those processed in 2018 (**425** cases) and 26 cases less than cases processed in 2017 (**402** cases). This decrease in numbers of requests received possibly reflects the restrictions in passenger movement during the COVID-19 pandemic.



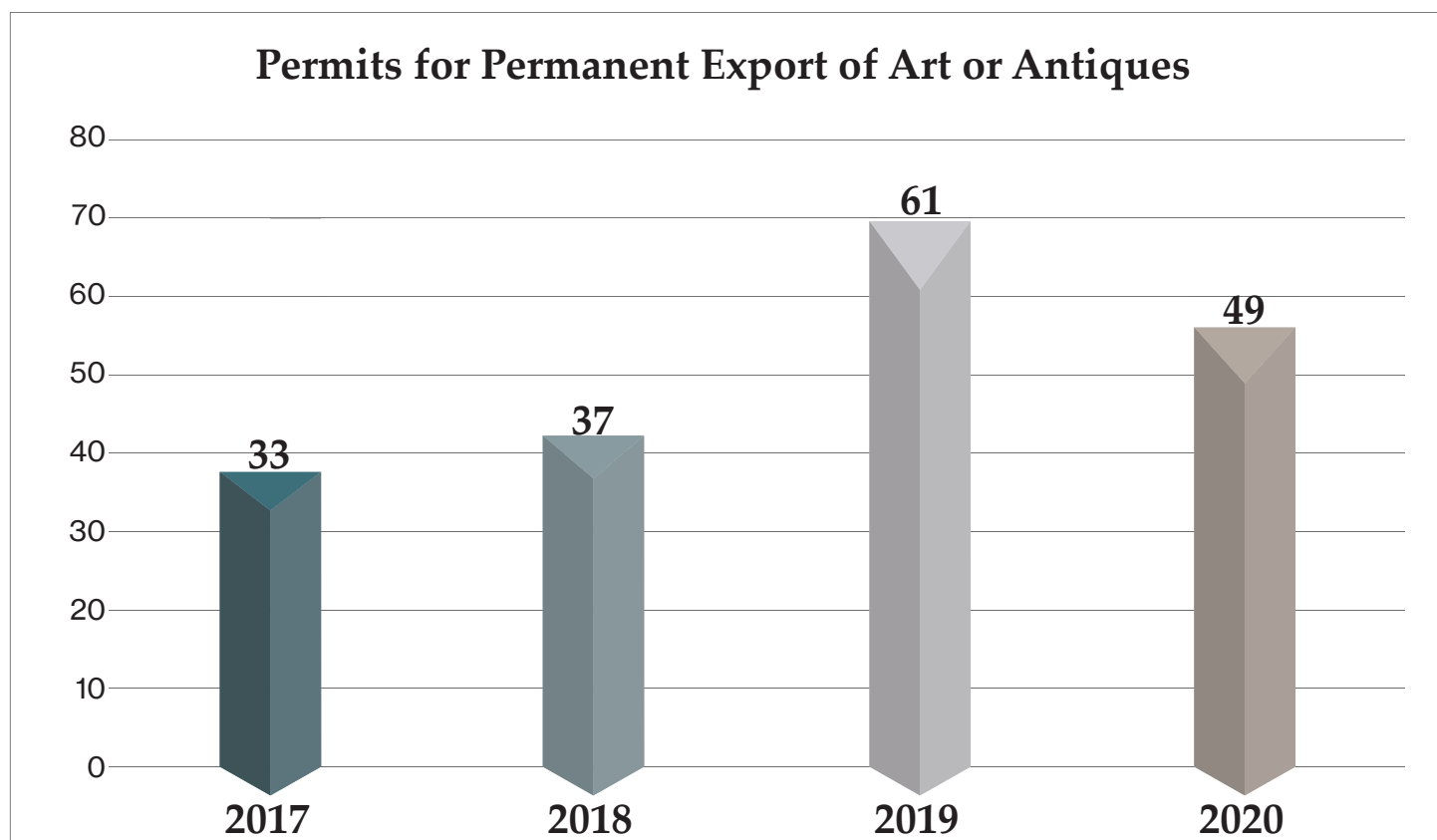
**Figure 9:** *Movement of personal items (non-cultural goods)*



## Export of Cultural Heritage Items Leaving the National Territory

As stated at law, the export of cultural heritage items from Malta requires permission from the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. In the course of 2020, the Superintendence issued **49** permits for the export of cultural heritage items. Of these **49** cases, **44** cases were for the export of contemporary or decorative art. None of the cases treated required inspecting the items, since adequate information for assessment had been made available to the Superintendence.

The **49** permissions granted in 2020 marked a substantial decrease over permissions as issued in 2019 (**61** cases).



**Figure 10:** *Permits for Permanent Export of Art or Antiques*

## Inspection and Certification of Cultural Items Imported from Outside the European Union

As stated at law, the Superintendence is also called upon by Customs Department to inspect and certify cultural heritage items that are imported from outside the European Union. This process is initiated by the importer to comply with Customs procedures. A 5% of the value of the item in question is collected as per L.N.4 of 1968, as amended by L.N.104 of 1981 and L.N.407 of 2007. The ad valorem fee of 5% of the cultural goods' value as accepted by the Superintendence may be waived when the nature of import involves educational, restoration and/or public exhibition purposes.

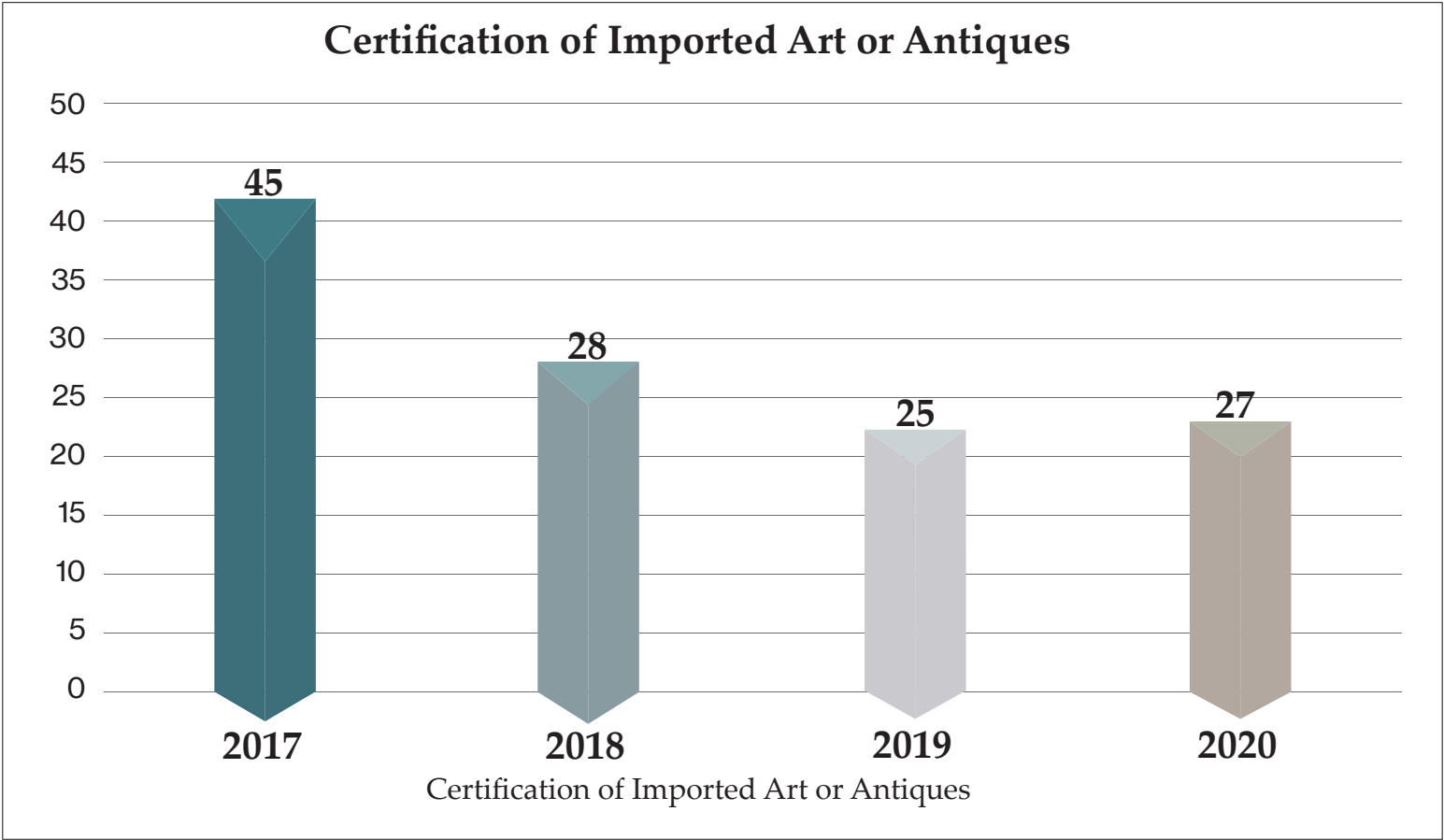
Items inspected in 2020 included silverware, ceramics, paintings, archaeological artefacts and World War II memorabilia.

In the course of 2020, the Superintendence inspected and certified the import of **27** cases of cultural heritage items. These 27 cases mark a slight increase on the 25 cases inspected in 2019.

These inspections of imported items generated revenue of **€4,640.60**. This marked a considerable decrease when compared to the €23,228.50 collected for import inspections in 2019.

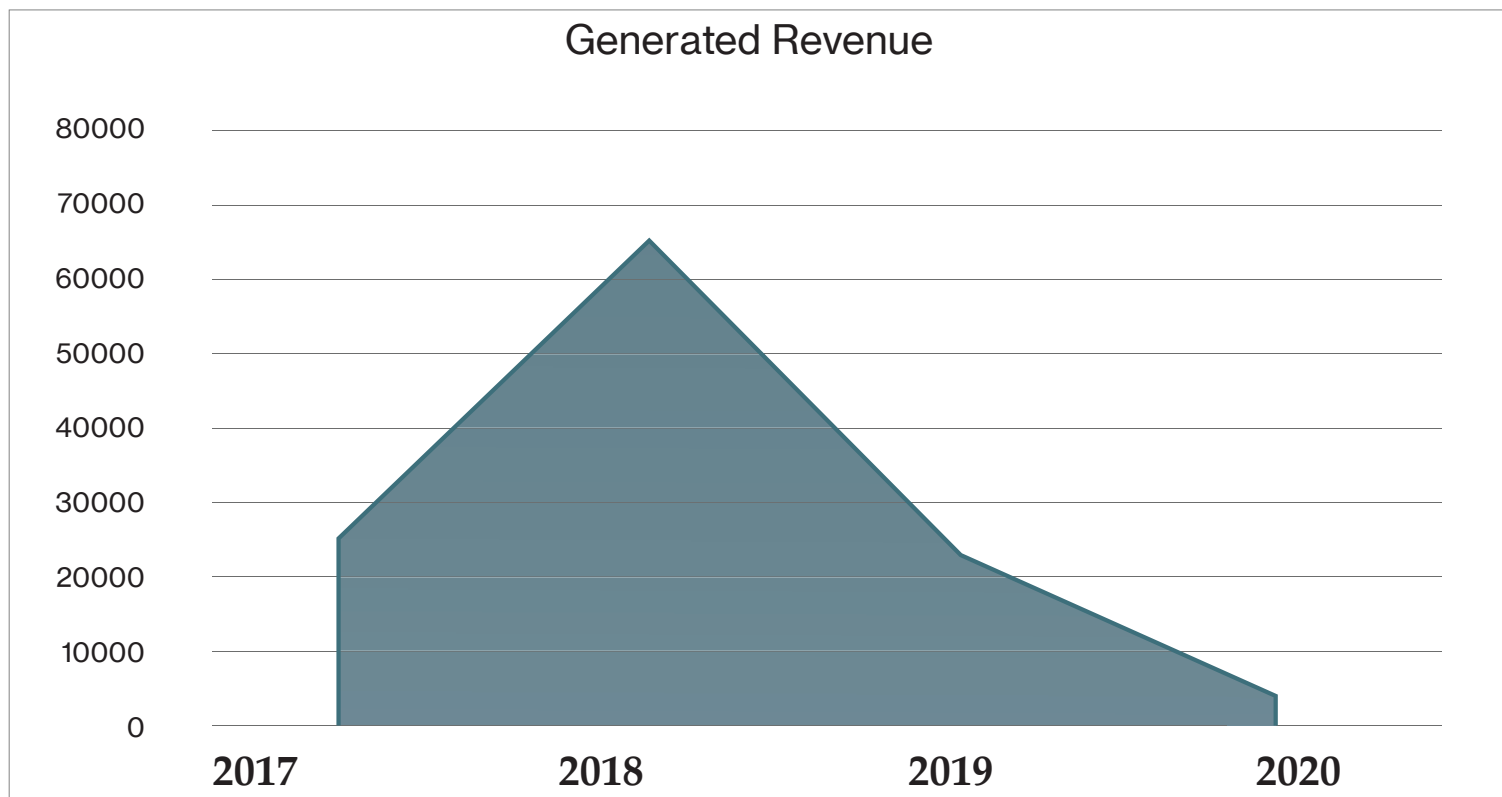
These unpredictable spikes in revenue are indicative of the exceptional import of prestigious and costly items during a given year.

In 2020, a total of **7** occasions involved the release of imported cultural goods originating from outside the EU including paintings, archaeological artefacts and decorative pieces which were initially registered with the Superintendence but consequently cleared by Customs Department after the owners decided to pay the full amount of VAT.



**Figure 11:** Certification of Importend Art and Antiques





**Figure 12:** *Generated revenue trend line between 2017 and 2020*

## Temporary Movement of Cultural Goods

The Superintendence also reviews and regulates applications for the temporary export of cultural goods out of the Maltese territory for purposes of restoration, exhibition, study or for other cultural purposes. No such cases were registered in 2020.

## Liaison with national and international agencies in enforcing movement of cultural items

The officer of the Superintendence in charge of the export/import of moveable heritage also attended Expert Group meetings and Project Groups on customs issues related to cultural goods remotely. During these meetings, Member States had the opportunity to discuss pressing issues related to the preparation for the implementation of the Import Regulation 880/2019, and the foreseen introduction of an EU-wide registration system.

The Superintendence retained access to the EU's Commission International Market Information System more commonly referred to as the IMI portal, which allows for direct and bilateral exchanges between Member States. The system is used when an authority or regulatory entity has reason to believe that a return of a cultural item is possible through this administrative procedure. The contacted authority must be able to identify the concerned item via the notification.

## Right of preference

As prescribed by Article 40 of the Cultural Heritage Act, “In the case of sale, export, exchange, emphyteutic grant or lease of an object of cultural property the Superintendent shall have the right, with the approval of the Minister in consultation with the Committee of acquiring the same, in preference to all others on equal conditions including consideration as that concluded between the parties”.

Right of preference is generally carried out in connection with proposed export of cultural heritage items, or in the case of sale at auction. Such action (in connection with sale at auction) is generally initiated on request of Heritage Malta or directly by the Superintendence, with the intention of acquiring items deemed as significant assets for inclusion in the National Collection. In the course of 2020, this measure was not exercised.

## Requests for consent to restore paintings

During 2020 the Superintendence received a few requests for the restoration of works of art of high calibre, especially those related with restoration funding schemes. The requests were supported by a restoration method statement drafted by qualified restorers who carried out the restoration.

- Restoration of painting depicting St Mauro Healing a Child at *Ta' Liesse Church*, Valletta
- Restoration of 6 paintings by Olaf Gollcher, Palazzo Falson museum collection
- Restoration of titular painting depicting the patronage of St Joseph by Giuseppe Cali and two side paintings (early 18th century of unknown artist), St George Parish Church, Qormi
- Restoration of painting depicting the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, by Francesco Zahra (1710-1773) located at St George Parish Church, Qormi
- Restoration of Madonna and Child statue by Gagini, *Ta' Giezu*, Rabat





*The Superintendence together with a paintings' conservator and other representatives from Heritage Malta inspecting the long-awaited imported 17th century painting by Mattia Preti, Boethius consoled by Philosophy*



*Preliminary inspection of the Madonna and Child statue by Gagini at PrevArti Laboratories before commencement of proposed restoration interventions*

## **Legal Action concerning movable cultural items**

As part of the growth of the Movable Cultural Heritage Team, it has been tasked with liaising with the Malta Police Force on issues related to potential illegal trade, movement, or retrieval of movable cultural heritage items. A few meetings were held with members of the police force responsible for cultural crime, whilst the Superintendence engaged with a number of reports on potentially illegal movement of objects. One joint Superintendence and Police inspection on such a case was carried out during 2020, whilst other cases are still being investigated.



## Standards for Inventory of Museums Collections

In the light of the unprecedented crisis brought about by the outbreak of COVID-19, it is of essence that museums and comparable private institutions effectively implement and enforce revised measures to ensure the protection of cultural heritage throughout these uncertain times. The majority of the world's museum establishments have had to close their premises to visitors and researchers alike. Museum professionals are now faced with the imminent challenge of ensuring the proper and effective security of their collections. The collections of each museum, gallery and archive necessitate different requirements which are reliant on the premises, responsible staff, and the security measures being undertaken amongst other equally important requirements.

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage sought to gather intelligent data regarding procedural revisions that have been adopted during recent months. All stakeholders were asked to forward an up-to-date summarised description of their institution's security protocol, which is presently in force, taking into account the current context. This was to serve as a benchmarking exercise for all institutions concerned.

Helpful measures and recommendations which were being circulated by ICOM and INTERPOL were forwarded as additional support and guidance, including:

- Analysis of the security situation and activation of protection plans;
- Adapting procedures.

Moreover, INTERPOL (ICOM) invited cultural establishments to inform them as soon as possible about any theft (of cultural heritage value) that took place during lockdown period. Institutes were requested to forward any instances of theft/unauthorised movement of cultural items within their collection to the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.



## 6. Cultural Heritage Research



## **Requests to carry out activities on cultural heritage sites**

A substantial decline in 2020 was noted with regards to requests for projects and activities to be carried out on cultural heritage sites. This decline is being largely attributed to the introduction of restrictions throughout the year due to Covid-19.

Though few, some requests were received from Heritage Malta as part of the restoration and management projects of their sites as well as from independent scholars who sought consent to carry out varying types of analysis, part of which invasive and which required exportation of micro-samples.

## **Research and Documentation**

In collaboration with Heritage Malta and the University of Malta, the Superintendence has embarked on a two year project whereby the existing OPSAS document (a document regulating procedures and standards on archaeology works carried out by freelance archaeologists) will be overhauled to establish new standards and criteria for all aspects of archaeology practice.

The main sections in the planned new manual will cover: stratigraphic excavation, written documentation, photographic documentation, special finds procedures, handling of objects needing special care in lifting, digital documentation, 3D modelling, UAVs, laser scanning, remote sensing, Drawn records, post-excavation, artefact illustration and recording, sampling, osteology, packing, surveying, chemical and physical analysis, digitisation, backfilling, marine archaeology, field walking, preliminary inspections and monitoring.



*Archaeologists carrying out field walking as part of a data-gathering exercise at Magħtab*

## **Rescue archaeological excavations**

2020 has provided different opportunities for officers from the Superintendence to conduct and participate in archaeological excavations. Such excavations are primarily development led in nature and in view of the limited resources of the Superintendence, it has not been possible at this stage to engage in research led archaeological investigations.

Whilst development led excavations are usually carried out by freelance archaeology monitors under the direction of the Superintendence, there may be cases where the Superintendence has to intervene either because of lack of availability of expertise in the open market or because the Superintendence - in line with the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Act - determines that the site's sensitivity requires its direct involvement. The following are the archaeological excavations in which the Superintendence has been directly involved. Other major archaeological interventions and discoveries in 2020 are also shown in Section 3.



## Site at *Triq Kola Xara*, **Rabat, Malta**

In the beginning of 2020, the Superintendence intervened in a development site which revealed an interesting multi-period archaeological site spanning the Punic-Roman period. The site, despite having been extensively altered and modified throughout the centuries, still preserved several features among which an ancient quarry containing a tomb, the upper part of which was truncated in a later quarrying episode. All the features which had been identified during site clearance by the freelance archaeologist assigned to the project as part of the surveillance work during the development works were fully investigated by the Superintendence. The archaeologist had carried out preliminary site clearance and recording, following which the Superintendence intervened and continued with the scientific investigation of the site.

An urn was unearthed in situ, still embedded in the rock surface along one of the quarry's sides, suggesting the transformation of an earlier industrial area into a funerary one in antiquity. The investigated tomb had the upper extents of the shaft as well as the ceiling of the chamber truncated in antiquity by quarrying. Notwithstanding this extensive damage, the archaeological investigation unearthed a considerable number of artefacts, amongst which four glass perfume bottles which were surprisingly still intact (see Image 49).

Beside the finds, traces of infant burials and articulated skeletons of an adult and older child were also uncovered. A preliminary analysis of the cultural and skeletal materials is in progress for its imminent publication, and this will add more data to the general understanding of the Rabat area. In the meantime, the features including the investigated tomb have been preserved whilst allowing construction to take place above them.



*Discovery of a tomb (upper part truncated) sited within an ancient quarry in Triq Kola Xara, Rabat, Malta*





*Human bones and associated material culture as found in situ during excavations in Triq Kola Xara, Rabat, Malta*

## Site at *Triq Ġużeppi Montebello, Tarxien, Malta*

The Superintendence continued the investigation of tombs forming part of a Punic necropolis, part of which had already been excavated in 2018 and 2019. The whole necropolis is located in a sizeable tract of land called Ta' Scicluna, within the development zone, which has been divided into a number of adjacent plots under different ownership. So far nine tombs have been discovered in this necropolis, and it is not excluded that in the part of the site not yet excavated, possibly more tombs remain to be discovered.

The investigated tombs consist of a vertical shaft leading down to a chamber hewn out in the rock. One of the tombs had two chambers, one at either end of the entrance shaft. The archaeological investigations undertaken by the Superintendence revealed that some of the tomb chambers were still sealed with a large stone slab blocking the entrance into the chamber. In these tombs the archaeologists discovered intact skeletons and urns with cremated bones, together with a significant number of objects. This discovery is particularly important in view of the number of tombs which were still sealed (tombs are generally found rifled and devoid of material) which provides important insight in past burial traditions and trade contacts, since these tombs are veritable time machines.

In the coming months, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage will be continuing with its studies on the extensive number of artefacts and human remains excavated from these tombs. Experts in various fields will proceed with the post-excavation phase of the collected remains which will include the study of pottery and other finds as well as the human bone, including cremations. All tombs will be preserved and integrated within the development.



*A sealed tomb discovered at Triq Ġużeppi Montebello, Tarxien, Malta. The tomb forms part of a necropolis within a sizeable tract of land known as Ta' Scicluna*





*A tomb discovered at Triq Ġużeppi Montebello, Tarxien, Malta after removal of the closing slab stone. The tomb forms part of a necropolis within a sizeable tract of land known as Ta' Scicluna*





*An amphora, broken in situ, found next to a trefoil jug within a tomb at Triq Gużeppi Montebello, Tarxien, Malta*





*A two-nozzled oil lamp and a bowl discovered within a tomb at Triq Gużeppe Montebello, Tarxien, Malta*

### **Site at Ta' Lampat, Gudja, Malta**

Trenching works along a country road for the provision of a water mains supply led to the accidental discovery of a tomb by cutting through its chamber. The tomb was still sealed, and no other tombs are recorded in the immediate vicinity. The Superintendence promptly intervened and carried out the necessary investigations in a short period of time.

The chamber appears to have contained a minimum of two individuals, partially articulated and infused with the underlying bedrock, together with a substantial number of artefacts in a poor state of conservation, including decorated jugs and bowls, which point to the Punic age, possibly of an early phase. Although being partially damaged, the chamber was fully excavated, and all the materials retrieved from it will be preliminarily analysed and published.

The small chamber tomb might be evidence of a cluster, as a second shaft tomb partially truncated was also found next to it during the investigations. The Superintendence will further assess the archaeological potential and significance of the area so as to broaden the understanding of the ancient landscape. The tombs will be covered by manholes to permit their preservation whilst still permitting the passing of the required services.



## Site at *Triq Tal-Barrani*, Ghaxaq, Malta

A Punic tomb preserving a single inhumation, with its personal grave goods of one trefoil jug and a small plate for ritual offerings, was unearthed during the monitoring of development driven works. The site lies along *Triq tal-Barrani*, which is well known for other significant discoveries made in the 20th century and consisting of burial sites marking the landscape from Punic to Late Roman ages. This new discovery sheds further light on the significance of this area in antiquity. The tomb lies close to a large number of agricultural trenches found in the same plot, adding further evidence to the intense use of the landscape. As in other cases the tomb will be preserved and integrated into the development. Further information on this discovery is also included in Section 3.



*An articulated skeleton found within a tomb discovered in Triq Tal-Barrani, Ghaxaq, Malta*



## **Site at *Triq Tal-Barrani*, Sta Luċija, Malta**

The Superintendence provided its osteological expertise to the archaeology monitors present on site responsible for archaeological surveillance in relation to ongoing road works. Although the tombs had already been disturbed in the past, they still contained cultural material and human remains in situ. The tombs appear to date to the Punic-Roman period and have been preserved in situ and will be provided with a permanent means of access.

It is interesting to note that the discoveries in Gudja, Sta Luċija, Hal Tarxien and Hal Ghaxaq were all located within a relatively close proximity to each other, on either side of *Triq tal-Barrani*, shedding further light on the landscape and its use in antiquity.

## **The courtyard and ex-Vestment Hall at St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta, Malta**

In 2020 works advanced further with the excavation works in the courtyard and within the ex-Vestment Hall at St John's Co-Cathedral, along Merchant Street. As in previous years further Knight's period burials were unearthed. The Superintendence continued supporting the freelance archaeologist carrying out surveillance and excavations on site employed by St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation by providing its Osteologists and Archaeologists to uncover and document the burials.

The Superintendence will be carrying out analyses on the extracted materials including the human remains which will accompany the archaeological drawings of the cemetery location and layout.

## **Manoel Island, Gzira, Malta**

Exploratory trenches were excavated along the old plague hospital to confirm the survival of a cemetery identified in early historical maps. Once burials of individuals were identified by the freelance archaeologists engaged by the developer, the Superintendence carried out detailed investigation in these trenches to establish the historical sequences of the area including the cemetery layers. Human remains and pottery sherds were also identified and collected. The Superintendence will carry out analysis on these materials in the coming months.

## Site at, Malta International Airport, Luqa

Towards the end of 2020 the Superintendence intervened on site to aid the archaeologists present on site in the excavation of human remains of a prehistoric tomb unearthed during monitored development works. Together with the freelance archaeologists the Superintendence carried out documentation and extraction of the osteological material involving both human and animal remains, as well as guidance and support to the archaeologists during the identification of various archaeological materials and strata.

The unearthed remains will be processed for analysis in 2021 in preparation for publication in collaboration with the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta and the freelance archaeologist present on site.

## Publications

Following the excavation of the remains of a tomb by the Superintendence in 2019, post-excavation process and analysis of the cultural and human remains excavated from the site have been concluded in the first quarter of 2020 and an excavation report has been prepared. The report has been submitted for inclusion in the Open Archaeology Journal special issue: **At the Crossroads of the Mediterranean: Malta and the Central Mediterranean During The Roman Period**. The report has been accepted by the Journal Editors and the report will be included in the Journal which is to be published in 2021.

The Superintendence participated in the **XVI CONFERENZA DEL COLORE** organised by the Gruppo del Colore and hosted remotely by the Università Degli Studi di Bergamo. The general theme of the conference was Colour and Colorimetry and the scientific application to colour analysis. The Superintendence submitted an article and poster with the title '*Gallarija Maltija: una caratteristica vivace dello streetscape maltese*'. The focus of the article is not on the historical evolution of the traditional timber balcony but the importance of identifying original colour rendering through scientific analysis so that as part of restoration schemes, appropriate colours are adopted for paint colours.

2020 saw the intensification of work on the FRAGSUS monographs (FRAGSUS is a European Research Council project launched in May 2013, focusing on the transformation and exploitation of the Maltese Islands when they were first occupied. This project is a cross border project involving five Institutions – one of which is the Superintendence - from three different countries. An official from the Superintendence sits on the editorial team responsible for the publication of this latter monograph which will be concluded by mid-2021.



## Intangible Heritage

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines Intangible Cultural Heritage as being: "... the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity."

In December 2020 the *ftira Maltija* (Maltese flat bread) was included in the list of World Intangible Heritage by UNESCO. The entry was possible through the efforts of the Department of Culture, namely Mr Mario Azzopardi, with the support of both previous Minister for Culture the Hon Dr Owen Bonnici and his successor the Hon Dr José Herrera together with the members of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee, of which the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage is a member.

The Maltese *ftira* is of cultural heritage value because of its association with the Maltese people as an expression of identity, distinctiveness, tradition, which aspects make it an attraction to visitors. It is a culinary standard bearer of hospitality for Malta. The Superintendence is working within the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee on further submissions that are synonymous with Malta, namely the *ghana* (Maltese folk song) and the festa (annual village feast).



## 7. Coastal and Underwater Archaeology



## Overview

During 2020, the Superintendence continued its engagement in the underwater cultural heritage sector, holding numerous discussions with the University of Malta and Heritage Malta on potential projects.

The Superintendence assessed requests for projects related to surveillance as well as research projects. At the request of Heritage Malta, in line with the Cultural Heritage Act 2019, new sites were declared as Archaeological Zones at Sea. The Superintendence also continued its engagement in environmental and planning projects, such as the *LifeBaħar* Project and the Marine Spatial Plan respectively.

## Requests for Excavations/Surveys

The Superintendence received the following requests for underwater excavations or studies from the University of Malta:

- Continuation of the Malta Shipwreck Survey Project;
- Underwater Excavation in Salina Bay of a possible Roman/Byzantine period deposit (not carried out);
- Underwater excavation of the Phoenician Xlendi wrecks;

The Superintendence joined the excavating teams on a few occasions on the projects, providing any needed assistance as surface support.



*Participants preparing the AUV (Autonomous Underwater Vehicle) as part of the Malta Shipwreck Survey Project*

The Superintendence also processed requests for the carrying out of surveys in relation to the laying of submarine cables as well as for the mapping of marine habitats.

## **Declaration of Archaeological Zones at Sea**

Further to work undertaken in 2019 when 12 sites were declared as Archaeological Zones at Sea, in line with the Cultural Heritage Act 2019 and at the request of Heritage Malta, **3** new sites have been declared as such during 2020, as follows:



Archaeological/Historical Wreck
Douglas Sky Raider
JU88
B-24 Liberator



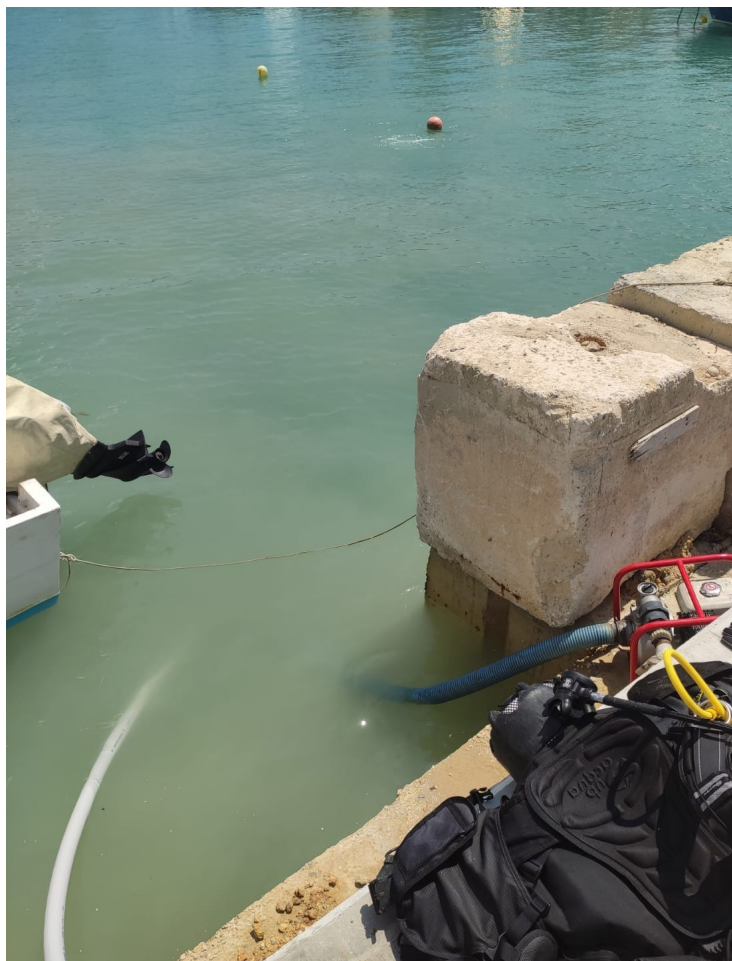
*Photograph of the wreck B24 Liberator (Photo source: Heritage Malta)*

## Other Projects

The Superintendence carried out underwater surveys and investigations in relation to projects subject to a development planning application. The scope of these surveys was to inform the Superintendence of the possible presence of cultural heritage features which may be affected by the proposed development.

An investigation was carried out in Mgarr Harbour, which consisted of excavations of trial pits in the seabed to determine the presence of cultural heritage artefacts, whilst surveys were carried out off Fort St Angelo and within Marsamxett Harbour.

The Superintendence also participated in an exercise organised by Heritage Malta and the University of Malta to test new underwater recording equipment which was recently purchased.



*Diving kit and dredging equipment used during the investigations carried out in Mgarr Harbour*





## 8. Other SCH Responsibilities

## Advice to Government and entities

The Superintendence also provides valuable policy guidance to Government and public entities in the cultural heritage sector as well replied to Parliamentary Questions, and given feedback to investigations by the Ombudsman.

## Representation on Committees / Board

The Superintendence participates and contributes in a number of government appointed Boards and Committees, amongst which include:

- Committee of Guarantee (ex officio);
- **Board tal-Warrant tar-Restawraturi (ex officio);**
- Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (Chairperson)
- Intangible Heritage Committee (Department of Culture);
- National Archives Committee (National Archives Directorate);
- Planning Authority Executive Council (ex officio, no voting powers, only on cultural heritage matters);
- National Mirror Committee on European Standards (Restoration) (MCCAA);
- World Heritage Sites Technical Committee (Malta Ambassador to UNESCO);
- Cottonera Rehabilitation Committee;
- E-RIHS working group;
- Bidnija Archaeological Site Core Group (with Heritage Malta & Department of Classics and Archaeology, University of Malta)
- World Heritage Site Tentative List – work with the co-ordinator of the nomination Dr Anthony Pace, the former Superintendent of Cultural Heritage (2003-18).

## Conventions and Charters

During 2020, Malta did not sign or ratify any international convention related to the field of cultural heritage (refer to full list below). The status has remained unchanged for several years.

Subjects covered by these conventions range from the protection of natural and cultural landscapes, illegal trafficking of items of cultural value, to the safeguarding of maritime cultural heritage and the intangible cultural heritage.

The signing and/or ratification of international legal instruments remains a high national priority and an international obligation.



## European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000)

October 2020 marked the twenty-year anniversary since the adoption of the European Landscape Convention. By the end of 2020, Malta was the only country that has signed but not yet ratified the European Landscape Convention.

During 2020 some discussion was held between the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage and the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) – as the main competent authority tasked with spearheading the ratification process of the convention. Similar discussions were also planned to take place between ERA and the Planning Authority.

Discussions revolved around national legislative frameworks and whether these conform with the convention, resources required by entities for the continuous monitoring and reporting requirements brought about further to ratification, and other related issues.

The Superintendence underlined the importance to also acknowledge underground cultural landscapes, which although not visible from above-ground would also require protection and adequate assessment.

Emphasis was also placed on the importance of adequate training for public officers from the respective entities and other relevant third parties. The training objectives are aimed at ensuring that all officials are aware of and conversant in Malta's obligations under the convention as well as other relevant international and EU obligations. The importance of wide public consultations as an integral part of the ratification and implementation process of the convention was also acknowledged.

### Status of international conventions related to the field of cultural heritage

CONVENTIONS - COUNCIL OF EUROPE	SIGNED	RATIFIED
European Cultural Convention, 1954	✓	✓
European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, London 1969 (London Convention, 1969)	✓	✓
Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, Granada 1985 (Granada Convention, 1985)	✓	✓
European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised), Valletta 1992 (Valletta Convention, 1992)	✓	✓

European Landscape Convention, Florence 2000	✓	
(Florence Convention, 2000)		
Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, Faro 2005 (Faro Convention, 2005)		

CONVENTIONS - UNITED NATIONS	SIGNED	RATIFIED
Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague 1954 (Hague Convention, 1954)		
Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague 1954 (Hague Protocol, 1954)		
Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, Paris 1970		
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris 1972	✓	✓
Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague 1999 (Hague 2nd Protocol 1999)		
Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, Paris 2001		
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Paris 2003		
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression, Paris 2005	✓	✓

CONVENTIONS - UNIDROIT	SIGNED	RATIFIED
Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects, Rome 1995		





## Exhibitions / events

In 2020, building up on experiences gained in 2019, the HDMRU sought to expand on Public Outreach in line with the Superintendence's Mission Statement to ensure and facilitate accessibility of Malta's cultural heritage. This year, such activities, had of course to be organised against the unknowns and restrictions brought about by the pandemic, the effects of which are still very much with us. To this effect, in 2020 the Superintendence decided not to hold any events in conjunction with **European Archaeology Days**, a Europe wide event coordinated by France's National Institute for Preventive Archaeological research (Inrap) organised annually in June.

On a more positive note, the easing of the effects of the pandemic and changes to legal restrictions, made it possible for the Superintendence to invest in the organisation of events in conjunction with **European Heritage Days (EHD)**. EHDs are a joint Council of Europe and European Union programme which sees the participation of 50 countries who are party to the European Cultural Convention by organising a number of events centred around a common European theme, which for 2020 was **Heritage and Education: Learning for Life**.

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage is the National Coordinator for EHDs and following the appointment in the end of 2019 of the Head of HDMRU as co-ordinator, the Superintendence sought to re-start participation in this programme, since the last time Malta participated was in 2013. The Superintendence sought to engage with other stakeholders in the setting up of events, and with the collaboration of Heritage Malta, Din l-Art Helwa, Friends of Villa Frère, Tarxien Local Council, Tarxien Scout Group, Gudja Local Council and SKALI NGO; 6 events were organised in the first weekend of October, when European Heritage Days were being celebrated in Malta. The events organised were varied and based on the two fundamental aspects of EHD, namely the access to sites/heritage items which are not usually accessible to the public and the relevance to the common theme selected for the particular year, which as stated was **Heritage and Education: Learning for Life in 2020**.

At its offices, the Superintendence set up an Exhibition on ancient languages present in Maltese Archaeology tying the idea of language being the key to education. The Superintendence exhibited artefacts bearing inscriptions or legends, together with associated artefacts to set the context. The items exhibited are not usually on public display, in keeping with the EHD concept of making usually inaccessible heritage accessible.



Within the same spirit, an exhibition and workshop were held at *Dar il-Kejka* in Tarxien, in collaboration with the Tarxien Local Council and the Tarxien Scout Group. The Superintendence took the opportunity to exhibit recently discovered artefacts from a Punic necropolis found in the locality. The residents from the area showed great interest in this discovery and this event was an important opportunity to interact with the community. As part of the event, workshops were held explaining post-excavation processes.

A similar event was held in the Medieval Chapel of Bir *Miftuh* where artefacts from a recently discovered Punic tomb were exhibited. Also in this case, members of the public could observe post-excavation processes and take part in workshops for the cleaning of part of the artefacts. With the collaboration of *Din l-Art Helwa*, visitors also had the opportunity to visit this magnificent Medieval Chapel with its unique frescoes.

Other events were more informal but equally popular. Friends of Villa Frère and Heritage Malta opened and organised tours at the Historic Villa Frère Gardens, whilst *Din l-Art Helwa* made available the Msida Bastion Garden and conducted a number of tours and fun activities for the younger participants, such as tombstone rubbing.

Finally, Heritage Malta held curator tours for children at *Hagar Qim* focusing on daily life in the Neolithic period.

All events held in conjunction with EHD were organised in full respect of Covid-19 guidelines as issued by the Department of Public Health.







*Event taking place at the Medieval Chapel of Bir Miftuh as part of European Heritage Days where artefacts from a recently discovered Punic tomb were exhibited*



*Artefacts on display at an exhibition organised together with the Tarxien Local Council and the Tarxien Scouts Group as part of European Heritage Days*



## Collaborations

The Superintendence firmly believes in outreach, collaboration, and cooperation. During 2020, the Superintendence collaborated with students following their Master of Arts in Archaeology Practice at the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta.

One of the study units followed in this M.A. programme is ARC5013 – Artefact Analysis, which amongst others requires students following the course to train in the illustration and photography of archaeological artefacts. The Superintendence made available artefact assemblages from recently discovered archaeological sites. For course assessment, students submitted a report and project, and the Superintendence will seek to collaborate with the students concerned and with the University of Malta to publish this material in the form of reports in specialised journals.

Also in Summer 2020, the Superintendence offered placements for students following this course which provided insights into the various functions the Superintendence carries out in its regulatory role.

The Superintendence has continued in its collaboration with the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta and the Max Plank Institute for the Science of Human History on various research projects. Research excavations in 2019 and subsequent analysis of finds throughout 2020 have yielded interesting results which will be pursued further in 2021.





# 10. SCH Cloud Platform Project



As part of the process started in 2018 to improve the operational efficiency of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, during 2020 the Superintendence also focused resources on the digital component.

The Superintendence initiated the mammoth task of digitising documentation held by the entity. A pilot phase was launched in 2020 with the objective of organising archaeology monitoring data spanning over the last decade. The documentation was organised, digitised and sorted into a pre-defined digital folder structure to ensure a consistent approach to case-filing and promote quick retrieval of information. The sorted documentation will eventually be transferred to a dedicated cloud platform. This will allow simultaneous access of the documentation by officials of the Superintendence including the use of IoT to engage more effectively with the data while working remotely or on-site.

The Superintendence also invested in its I.C.T. infrastructure and set up a dedicated space for the SCH cloud platform project. Although still at its infancy the SCH cloud platform project is considered a very important tool to improve the management and integration of data as well as the cultural heritage services provided by the Superintendence to the general public.

In parallel to the digitisation process, a custom-built search and data-retrieval tool has been developed to facilitate case-searches and viewing of case-related documentation specific to the archaeological monitoring function of the Superintendence.

Once the SCH cloud platform is operational, improved accessibility to the digitised data will further strengthen the function of the Superintendence when implementing its legal mandate which also includes guiding planning decisions.



*Dedicated space for the SCH cloud platform project*





SOVRINTENDENZA  
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI


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